

Alaska Transportation Priorities Project * Sitka Conservation Society * Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

December 31, 2008

Comments on the revised draft mission statement and goals for the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan

Thank you for considering the following comments from the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project (ATPP), Sitka Conservation Society (SCS), and Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) on the mission statement and goals for the upcoming revision of the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP). These comments are consistent with ATPP, et al.'s comments submitted on October 31, 2008. As noted in those comments, ATPP, a non-profit, works with conservation organizations, transit advocates, community leaders, neighborhood organizations, engineers, cargo shippers, and others to promote sensible transportation systems and policies in Alaska. In general, ATPP supports safe, economic, well-maintained, and environmentally-appropriate transportation systems in Alaska.

Sitka Conservation Society, a non-profit organization, has been working to protect the temperate rainforest of southeast Alaska and Sitka's quality of life since 1967.

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, a non-profit organization, is a coalition of 15 volunteer citizen organizations based in 13 Southeast Alaska communities dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of Southeast Alaska's unsurpassed natural environment while providing for the sustainable use of our region's resources.

Initially, we note that a due date for comments of December 31 is a severe hardship for members of the public who would like to comment, especially since notice of the open comment period was not sent via email until mid-December.¹ A high percentage of the public takes time off immediately previous to December 31, making it difficult or impossible for them to comment on this topic. We urge the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT) to extend the comment period on the revised mission statement and goals for the SATP to the end of January. Additionally, we believe that ADOT needs to publish a notice on the state's public notice website requesting comments, rather than reaching out only via email to previous commenters. It is possible that members of the public who had not commented previously might choose to comment at this point.

¹ On December 8, 2008, ATPP incidentally heard at a Marine Transportation Advisory Board meeting about the December 15 comment period deadline; that deadline later was extended to December 31. The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities notified ATPP of the December 31 deadline via email on December 15, thus allowing only 16 days for the "official" comment period.

Substantive Comments

With all due respect, we remain concerned that ADOT does not have a good understanding of a strategic planning process, and of the specifics of this transportation planning process. A well-developed strategic planning process would consist of a mission statement that is a comprehensive statement of purpose, goals that are specific outcomes which follow from the mission statement and are not independent of the mission statement, and objectives that are specific targets that must be met to accomplish the goals. With respect to the specifics of this transportation planning process, the SATP must be consistent with the statewide long-range transportation plan known as *Let's Get Moving 2030 (2030)*,² and the revised draft mission statement is not consistent with ADOT's mission statement as published in *2030*.

How the Revised Draft Mission Statement is Inconsistent with *2030*

The *2030* mission statement is:

The mission of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is to provide for the safe movement of people and goods and the delivery of state services.

*A Department of Transportation and Public Facilities that plans, designs, constructs, operates and maintains quality, safe, efficient sustainable transportation and public facilities that meet the needs of Alaska's diverse population, geography and growing economy.*³

The revised draft mission statement speaks to “maximizing mobility,” which is inconsistent with the *2030* mission statement. The *2030* mission statement sensibly says nothing about maximizing mobility because that would be cost prohibitive (“ensuring safe and efficient mobility,” however, would be consistent). As discussed below, a consistent mission statement for the SATP which we believe that ADOT should adopt would address safe, efficient, reliable and environmentally-responsible transportation in Southeast Alaska.

Mission: Safe, Efficient, Reliable, and Environmentally-Responsible Transportation

The 1999 SATP mission statement largely reflects our proposed mission statement: “[T]o provide a transportation system for the movement of people, goods and vehicles between communities in Southeast Alaska and to/from Southeast Alaska that is convenient, efficient, reliable, safe and affordable.”⁴ We support a similar mission statement, but

² See <http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/areaplans/lrtpp/SWLRTPHome.shtml> (February 2008).

³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴ See 1999 Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan, p. 12.

recommend that ADOT also include an emphasis on environmentally-responsible transportation systems, an important component of 2030's policies that unfortunately (mistakenly?) was not included in the 2030 mission statement or vision.⁵

We support including the following elements in the SATP Mission Statement, each of which is important and consistent with 2030, as described below:

Safe: This adjective describes the need for a Southeast Alaska transportation system that is unlikely to result in injuries or deaths in the short or long-term. See Policy 9 (p. 13) from 2030.

Efficient: This adjective describes the need for a Southeast Alaska transportation system that is cost-effective to the state and user, including over the long-term. An efficient transportation system also means one that is technically well-designed, including designing for energy conservation. See Policies 1 (p. 10), and 5 and 6 (p. 12) from 2030.

Reliable: This adjective describes the need for a Southeast Alaska transportation system that will not be inoperable during harsh, Southeast weather conditions or, for example, as a result of avalanches. See Policy 8 (p. 13) from 2030.

Environmentally-Responsible: This adjective describes the need for a Southeast Alaska transportation system that protects ecosystems and minimizes the system's impacts on climate change. See Policies 11 (p. 15) and 12 (p. 16).

Goals: Desired End Results Which Follow from the Mission Statement

SATP's four goals should track each of the components of the mission statement (i.e., safe, efficient, reliable, and environmentally-responsible transportation systems), discussed in the previous section. The revised draft mission statement and goals do not do that. For example, revised draft Goal 2 covering "economic vitality" is a fine, natural outcome of a safe, efficient, reliable, and environmentally-responsible transportation system that moves people and goods, but it should not be listed as a goal since it is not reflected in the mission statement. Our proposed goals for each of these criteria are described in the previous section.

Objectives: Specific and Measureable Targets for Accomplishing Goals

We support an SATP objective focusing on improving existing infrastructure in Southeast Alaska, specifically the community-to-community ferry system as part of the efficiency, reliability, and environmental-responsibility goals. We also support an SATP objective of developing a source of state funding for transportation operational costs as part of the efficiency goal. Last, we support an objective of improving public

⁵ The Oregon Transportation Plan, for example, includes the term "environmentally responsible" in its vision (see vision in <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/docs/ortransplanupdate/2007/OTPvol1.pdf>, p. 33).

transportation, including ferries, in communities in Southeast Alaska as part of the efficiency and environmental-responsibility goals.

Summary

ATPP, SCS, and SEACC urge ADOT to consider a mission statement focusing on safe, efficient, reliable, and environmentally-responsible transportation systems, and an overall revised plan that is consistent with the statewide long-range transportation plan, *Let's Get Moving 2030*. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Lois Epstein of ATPP at lois@aktransportation.org or 907 929-9372.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Lois N. Epstein, P.E.
Director
Alaska Transportation Priorities Project

Andrew Thoms
Executive Director
Sitka Conservation Society

Buck Lindekugel
Conservation Director
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council