

# Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan SCOPING REPORT Public Engagement Summary January 2012



## 2011 Update Scoping Report



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## INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP) is a regional multimodal transportation plan that provides a framework for improving transportation between communities within Southeast Alaska. The Plan looks at Southeast Alaska's network of roads, ferries and airports, at the operating and maintenance costs of the network, and at changes to improve connectivity and stabilize system costs.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) is preparing an update to the current SATP (issued in 2004) that will consider changes in the Southeast Alaska's industries, economy, population, and infrastructure since that time, as well as the current fiscal outlook and costs. This update began in 2008 when a Mission Statement and Goals were developed with public input.

In August 2011, the Southeast Alaska region of the ADOT&PF published a Scoping Report for the SATP with six preliminary alternatives. In September and October ADOT&PF conducted an intensive public outreach and engagement effort to seek review and comment on the Scoping Report. Outreach efforts included hosting 20 public meetings and 22 meetings with municipal or tribal governments throughout Southeast Alaska. This report summarizes this effort and the comments received. Comments were due by close of business on November 4, 2011. The ADOT&PF will use this information to help identify its Preferred SATP Transportation alternative and prepare the Draft Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

The ADOT&PF mailed the SATP Scoping Report in late August 2011 to 175 individuals affiliated with either a municipal or a tribal government in Southeast Alaska, the Legislature, or an organization that had previously expressed interest.

Public notification about the release of the Scoping Report, where public meetings were being held, and how and when to submit comments occurred by mail, radio public service announcements, on flyers posted in communities, by email, through a dedicated website ([www.dot.alaska.gov/satp](http://www.dot.alaska.gov/satp)), and in nine Southeast Alaska newspaper display ads (Table 1).

A review of the Scoping Report with a Question and Answer session occurred at open houses or public meetings in 20 communities in September through early November 2011; and at 22 meetings with municipal or tribal governments in the region (Table 2).

A total of 338 individuals not affiliated with the project signed-in and attended at least one of these meetings.

ADOT&PF staff also reviewed and discussed the SATP Scoping Report with the Marine Transportation Advisory Board.

TABLE 1. SATP Scoping Report - Public Meetings Newspaper Display Ads	
NEWSPAPER	DATE OF DISPLAY AD (ALL 2011)
<b>Juneau Empire</b>	Sunday, September 18; Sunday, October 2; Sunday, October 9
<b>Capital City Weekly</b>	Wednesday, September 21; Wednesday, October 5
<b>Ketchikan Daily News</b>	Saturday, September 17; Saturday, October 1; Saturday, October 8; Wednesday, October 12
<b>Sitka Sentinel</b>	Wednesday, September 21; Wednesday, October 5; Wednesday, October 12
<b>Petersburg Pilot</b>	Thursday, October 13
<b>Chilkat Valley News</b>	Thursday, September 29
<b>Skagway News</b>	Friday, September 23
<b>The Fairweather Reporter</b>	Monday, September 5
<i>Other: (1) An ad was scheduled for the Thursday, October 13 Wrangell Sentinel, but the newspaper forgot to run it. (2) We never got a response from Island News to run an ad; however, in the October 5 issue a poorly reproduced ad appeared without our knowledge or proofing.</i>	

TABLE 2. SATP Scoping Report Public, Municipal and Tribal Government Meetings		
COMMUNITY	DATE	MEETINGS
<b>Angoon</b>	Oct 24	Public meeting in the Angoon City Hall from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm
<b>Coffman Cove</b>	Oct 27	Public meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers at 7:00 pm
<b>Craig</b>	Oct 12	Meeting with City of Craig representatives at City Hall at 10:30 am
		Meeting with Craig Tribal Association and Organized Village of Kasaan representatives at the CTA office at 1:15 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Craig City Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Gustavus</b>	Sept 28	Meeting with City of Gustavus representatives at the Gustavus City Hall at 11:00 am
		Open house and public meeting at the Gustavus City Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Haines</b>	Oct 6	Meeting with Haines Borough representatives at Borough Offices at 10:00 am
		Meeting with Chilkoot Indian Association representatives at CIA offices at 2:00 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Haines Borough Assembly Chambers from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

<b>Hoonah</b>	Oct 6	Meeting with City of Hoonah representatives at the City Hall at 11:00 am
		Meeting with Hoonah Indian Association representatives at HIA office at 1:30 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Hoonah City Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Hydaburg</b>	Oct 26	Public meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
<b>Juneau</b>	Sept 26	Open house and public meeting at Centennial Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
	Oct 10	Meeting with Juneau Assembly members at during Committee of the Whole at Assembly Chambers at 6:00 pm
	Oct 27	Meeting with Douglas Indian Association representatives at DIA Office at 12:00 pm
	Nov 2	Meeting with Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska representatives at the Andrew Hope Building at 8:15 am
<b>Kake</b>	Oct 11	Meeting with Organized Village of Kake representatives at their offices at 10:30 am
		Meeting with City of Kake representatives at the City Hall at 12:00 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Kake City Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Ketchikan</b>	Oct 11	Meeting with Ketchikan Borough representatives at Borough Offices at 10:00 am
		Meeting with Ketchikan Indian Community representative at the KIC office at 1:00 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Ted Ferry Civic Center from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Klawock</b>	Oct 26	Public meeting at the City Hall Council Chambers at 6:00 pm
<b>Metlakatla</b>	Oct 17	Public meeting at the Metlakatla Council Chambers at 9:30 am
<b>Pelican</b>	Oct 26	Public meeting by teleconference with City of Pelican representatives at 10:00 am at City Hall
<b>Petersburg</b>	Oct 20	Open house and public meeting at the Petersburg City Council Chambers from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Sitka</b>	Oct 19	Meeting with City and Borough of Sitka representatives at Borough Offices at 1:00 pm
		Meeting with Sitka Tribe of Alaska representative at STA office at 2:15 pm
		Open house and public meeting at Centennial Hall from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Skagway</b>	Oct 4	Meeting with Skagway Traditional Council representative in Juneau
	Oct 5	Meeting with the Municipality of Skagway at Borough Offices at 1:00 pm
		Open house and public meeting at the Skagway Borough Assembly



		Chambers from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Tenakee Springs</b>	Oct 25	Public meeting by teleconference with City of Tenakee Springs representatives at 10:00 am
<b>Thorne Bay</b>	Oct 25	Public Meeting at the Bay Chalet at 6:30 pm
<b>Wrangell</b>	Oct 18	Meeting with City and Borough of Wrangell representatives at City Hall at 10:30 am
		Open house and public meeting at the Nolan Center from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
<b>Yakutat</b>	Oct 4	Open house and public meeting at High School Auditorium from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
	Oct 5	Meeting with City and Borough of Yakutat representatives at Borough Offices at 10:00 am
		Meeting with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe representatives at YTT office at 11:15 am
<b>Other: MTAB</b>	Oct 14	Meeting with the Marine Transportation Advisory Board

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were 167 written comments submitted between the beginning of the public comment period in late August 2011 and the close of the comment period on November 4, 2011. Comments came from individuals that live in 22 communities in Southeast Alaska and Anchorage (Table 3).

In addition to documenting written commentary, verbal comments made at one of the 20 public meetings or 22 tribal or municipal government meetings were documented for the record. When all comments are combined and broken out topic-by-topic, a total of 939 individual remarks were captured and included in the “Comment Matrix” for the Scoping Report. Hoonah residents also submitted a petition with just under 475 signatures.

Almost half (46 percent) of all comments are from Haines, Juneau or Skagway, two-third of all comments come from northern Southeast Alaska (not including the Hoonah petition).

There were 24 written comments submitted from a representative of an organization, local or tribal government, or business, including:

1. Alaska Glacier Seafoods, Inc
2. Alaska Transportation Priorities Project (press release)
3. Angoon Trading Company
4. Baranof Property Owners Association
5. Baranof Wilderness Lodge
6. Catotti and Goldberg Art Studio
7. Chelan Produce Company
8. City and Borough of Sitka

9. City of Gustavus
10. City of Kake
11. City of Thorne Bay
12. Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce (Resolution 2011-03)
13. Haines Chamber of Commerce (1997 letter to DOT)
14. Inter-Island Ferry Authority
15. Juneau International Airport
16. Lynn Canal Conservation, Inc
17. Marine Transportation Advisory Board
18. Mountain Corporation dba Mountain Market and Café
19. Ms Lucy Taxi & Currier Service
20. Organized Village of Kake
21. Representative Cathy Munoz
22. Skagway Marine Access Commission
23. Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
24. The Law Office of Geoffrey Y. Parker

<b>TABLE 3. SATP Scoping Report Residence of Commenter</b>				
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>WRITTEN COMMENTS</b>		<b>ALL COMMENTS RECORDED</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Gustavus</b>	5	3%	31	3%
<b>Haines</b>	39	23%	192	20%
<b>Hoonah</b>	11	7%	66 **	7%
<b>Juneau/Douglas</b>	43	26%	151	16%
<b>Pelican</b>	5	3%	19	2%
<b>Skagway</b>	10	6%	93	10%
<b>Yakutat</b>	7	4%	38	4%
<b>Total, northern Southeast Alaska</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Angoon</b>	5	3%	42	4%
<b>Kake</b>	3	2%	24	3%
<b>Kupreanof</b>	2	1%	9	1%
<b>Petersburg</b>	7	4%	36	4%
<b>Sitka</b>	9	5%	67	7%
<b>Tenakee Springs</b>	2	1%	23	2%
<b>Warm Springs Bay</b>	2	1%	2	0%
<b>Wrangell</b>	2	1%	35	4%
<b>Total, central Southeast Alaska</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Craig</b>		0%	13	1%
<b>Kasaan</b>		0%	8	1%
<b>Ketchikan</b>	2	1%	39	4%

<b>Klawock</b>	2	1%	5	1%
<b>Metlakatla</b>		0%	2	0%
<b>Prince of Wales</b>		0%	3	0%
<b>Thorne Bay</b>	2	1%	7	1%
<b>Total, southern Southeast</b>	17	10%	77	8%
<b>Unknown</b>	7	4%	29	3%
<b>Anchorage</b>	2	1%	5	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	167	100%	939	100%
<i>** Hoonah count does not include signers of petition</i>				



## PUBLIC COMMENT BY TOPIC

### **Preliminary Alternative 1: Maintain the Existing System**

This alternative would replace existing ferries in kind, as required to maintain the existing ferry fleet capacity, routes, and level of service. This alternative serves as the baseline alternative against which all other alternatives are compared.

### **Mainline Ferries**

- Mainline ferries have been in use a long time in Southeast Alaska; commenters find them reliable and trusted as they are able to operate in rough weather. Newer ferries, such as the fast ferries, have had problems operating in Southeast weather conditions and engine difficulties, which creates lack of trust for other types of ferries and a fear of change.
- Mainline ferries offer comfortable and reliable transportation in all weather/sea situations and are enjoyed for all purposes including school and medical travel. Staterooms are appreciated.

### **Maintain Existing Transportation System**

- Support for maintaining the existing system comes mostly from commenters who are ardent ferry supporters and do not want roads, trust mainline vessels, or fear that other options will drop the level of service they receive.
- A number of commenters suggest that when mainline vessels need replaced, do so with similar but more fuel-efficient ferries.
- Commenters value larger ferries for the reliability and comfort operating in Southeast sea conditions they provide. They do not want, or do not have the option of, air service in winter storms or during periods of fall/winter fog.

### **Preliminary Alternative 2 - Fleet Capacity Management**

This alternative is based on management of excess route and system capacity to match demand and reliance on other modes of transportation, such as air service and private freight carriers, when traffic does not warrant the cost of ferry service. This alternative would manage fleet capacity in a way that more closely matches current and projected future traffic demand.

### **Capacity Management**

- Commenters agree that demand could be better matched to capacity. However, this does not necessarily mean support for using the system of capacity management

proposed in the Scoping Report Alternative 2 but rather capacity management in general.

- Some comment that capacity should not be managed based on the usage of the car deck alone, but instead or in addition on the number of passengers or the revenue generated.
- Those opposing capacity management or skeptical about it suspect this is another way of wording service cuts. Commenters from almost every community want more ferry service and the idea of less is of high concern.
- Many commenters suggest that the Alaska Class Ferry is a good way to manage capacity and should be part of the preferred alternative.
- The Marine Transportation Advisory Board position is to implement a three-year reliable schedule to allow residents, communities and businesses to plan, schedule appointments, and market their business offerings and services. This strategy by necessity results in some excess capacity, which is acceptable to achieve a desired regular schedule.

### **Preliminary Alternative 3 - Maximize Use of Existing Roads**

This alternative would not provide ferry service if there is a road alternative to prevent redundancy in the system. It would discontinue ferry service to Bellingham, Washington and across the Gulf of Alaska (including Yakutat). It would manage AMHS system vehicle capacity as described in Alternative 2.

### **Bellingham Ferry Service**

- Commenters supporting continued Bellingham ferry service find that:
  - It offers a convenient way to travel to/from the Lower 48 with a vehicle, for families, or while transporting large objects;
  - It avoids crossing international borders to access the Lower 48, which is important for people who cannot travel through Canada such as non-passport holders, weapon transportation (military, hunters), and people with convictions such as DUIs;
  - It is important in the winter when travel by road to the Lower 48 is difficult and dangerous; and thus at a minimum ferry service to Bellingham in the winter is desired;
  - It is believed to generate a profit<sup>1</sup>;
  - If eliminated the military will no longer travel through Southeast Alaska on their way to and from bases outside of this region;

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<sup>1</sup> No ferries generate a profit; all ferries generate revenue.

- It is used by seasonal workers to come to and from Southeast for summer employment; and
- Some use it regularly to head south for the winter and come back in the spring.
- Commenters opposed to Bellingham ferry service find it:
  - Is expensive and inefficient;
  - Only carries about 4% percent of travel to and from the region and Lower 48 and the money and effort to run it should instead be used for transportation within the region;
  - Competes with the private sector; and
  - Caters to independent tourists and people who live outside the region, rather than regional residents.
- Commenters are concerned that if Bellingham service is eliminated the cost of travel will increase for residents.
- Some suggest that if Bellingham service must be changed, reduce rather than eliminate it.

### **Yakutat/ Cross Gulf Ferry Service**

- Commenters note that Yakutat has no road access, is isolated and relies on the ferry service for transportation of pedestrians, vehicles and freight. Commenters are concerned that due to its isolation, elimination of AMHS ferry service would result in higher travel costs, a higher cost of living for residents, and higher freight costs.
- Commenters are frustrated by often not being able to get a car reservation north or south on the ferry because it is full. Thus, they cite a need for more, not less, cross-gulf service. One suggestion is for the Kennicott to be devoted to a Juneau-Yakutat-Whittier run.
- It is noted that Alaskan military are important users of the cross Gulf of Alaska ferry service to transit to and from the Lower 48 and central Alaska's military bases<sup>2</sup>.
- Opposition to the cross-gulf ferry service comes from commenters concerned that not many people use it and it only transports a small percentage of people traveling north.

### **Preliminary Alternative 4 - Alaska Class Ferries**

This alternative would replace three aging mainline ferries over time with three new 350-foot Alaska Class shuttle ferries and one new mainline ferry, resulting in a slight increase in fleet capacity.

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<sup>2</sup> Research and planning level estimates show that a maximum of 10% of the Alaskan military use the AMHS ferry to/from Alaska.

## Alaska Class Ferries

- Commenters support Alaska Class Ferries because:
  - They will be able to respond better to seasonal demand changes than mainliners.
  - They will be more fuel efficient than mainliners<sup>3</sup>.
  - They are most like the current system of mainliners with which people are familiar and comfortable.
  - This is a marine transportation option, which is favored because it is familiar, this is a maritime place, and it is safe and reliable.
  - It is believed that building them in-state will offer employment, improve the regional economy and potentially help boost the population.
  - In-state design and construction will allow the same people to be involved in every stage of the building process, making it less likely for errors to occur.
- Several comments suggest that the first Alaska Class Ferry be thoroughly tested before a second or third Alaska Class ferry is considered.
- Many commenters are concerned that there are not adequate places to rest (children, sick, and elderly) on the Alaska Class ferries and suggest there be some staterooms.
- No commenter is opposed to Alaska Class ferries per se.

## Berners Bay Ferry Terminal (alternative 4 / early part of alternative 5)

- Many comments are opposed to a Berners Bay ferry terminal. The main concern is the inconvenience of land transportation to/from Juneau and Berners Bay (see *AMHS Walk-on Travelers*, pg 12). Also, the road will be long and some commenters believe it will be dangerous driving to get there.
- Some commenters object due to the impact it would have on Berners Bay – trash, aesthetics, fish and marine mammal habitat, historic resources, etc.
- The only specific support for a Berners Bay ferry terminal is from those who support a road along west (rather than east) Lynn Canal and support a shuttle ferry terminal at Berners Bay and opposite on west Lynn Canal. One suggests that AMHS and the Kensington Mine co-locate a ferry terminal in the area and another suggests that the road go past Berners Bay and to a point northward just before the first avalanche chute and a terminal and shuttle ferry system go from there.

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<sup>3</sup> Many commenters believe this; however, Alaska Class ferries may not be more fuel efficient than other ferries once other ferries have fuel management systems with constant throttle settings installed.

### **Preliminary Alternative 5 - Highway Route 7**

This alternative would replace all mainline ferries with a combination of shuttle ferries and four highway segments. Ultimately, vehicle traffic would traverse the road system on Prince of Wales Island between Hollis and Coffman Cove, the Mitkof Highway and a proposed highway between Kake and Petersburg, and a highway between Juneau and Skagway.

### **Highway Route 7 / Shuttle Ferry Concept**

- Commenters who support Alternative 5 do so because they find:
  - A road network-shuttle ferry system will be more financially sustainable (operation and maintenance) in the long run than the current ferry system.
  - It will help connect and benefit smaller communities, by increasing access and the amount of travelers thorough and spending in these communities.
  - Several comment that travel costs will be less expensive by road than by ferry. It is believed that road access will reduce the cost and increase the ability to ship fish to markets. It will decrease the cost of goods and services while opening up business opportunities.
  - Some commenters, both supporters of Alternative 5 and some who could support it if - suggest it include public transportation for foot passengers between AMHS terminals (see *AMHS Walk-on Travelers*, page 12).
- Comments from smaller places, including Prince of Wales Island communities, Kake and Angoon, tend to support Alternative 5.
- Commenters opposed to Alternative 5 are so because they find:
  - The small shuttle ferries will not be able to handle the sea conditions in Southeast and road segments will be closed in winter due to avalanches and other conditions, thus access will decrease.
  - This alternative's capital costs are very high, exceed realistic expectations of capital funding, and are beyond the time period of the plan.
  - The road-shuttle ferry system will result in travel across the region that is inconvenient for residents, difficult, time consuming, and more expensive.
  - Walk-on passengers will be stranded unless a bus service exists, and commenters do not believe a bus service will be commercially viable because routes will be isolated and not profitable.
  - They do not support road building, or feel that the number who will use the roads cannot justify the capital cost.

## Lynn Canal Highway

- Commenters supporting the Lynn Canal Highway do so because:
  - Access between communities in Lynn Canal will increase with the road and it will make the trip less expensive for travelers.
  - Increased access will improve the economies of all communities through less expensive shipping, increased tourism, new business opportunities, etc.
  - This road will decrease ferry use and be more economically sustainable. Although the road will have a high capital cost, the lower maintenance costs will pay off in the long run.
  - The road will free ferries to be redeployed to other Southeast Alaska routes.
  - This road will provide easier access to Juneau and end the call for a capital move.
  - A commenter notes that a road connection from Juneau to the continental road system will benefit commodity transshipment and commerce, particularly for fish.
- Commenters opposing the Lynn Canal Highway do so because:
  - Winter conditions will result in frequent road closures and there is concern that smaller shuttle ferries will not be able to handle rough seas. The road will therefore decrease access between communities.
  - The road will be long and dangerous to drive, especially in the winter.
  - It will be inconvenient for walk-on passengers and the expense of ground transportation will result in increased user costs overall.
  - Some are skeptical about the accuracy of the ADOT&PF cost estimates and expect road construction costs to continue to increase.
  - Maintenance costs will be very high due to clearing snow, avalanches and landslides.
  - There will be negative environmental, scenic and historical resource impacts, which will harm wildlife and tourism.
- A few commenters from Haines suggest that the Lynn Canal Highway be built along the west side of Lynn Canal.
- One commenter wonders why, after the Lynn Canal Highway is built, there will still be 7 round trip ferries per week in the winter and 14 in the summer on a route that parallels a road (Table 12)? What is the point of increasing the level of ferry service on this route after construction of the road?



## Road to Warm Spring Bay

- Commenters supporting a Warm Spring Bay Road believe that it will shorten the time it takes to travel by ferry to and from Sitka and thus increase frequency of ferry service and access to Sitka.
- Commenters opposed believe that the road will be difficult to drive and expensive to build. Once the road is built, avalanches and landslides would keep it closed a considerable amount of the time. This would therefore decrease access to Sitka and have high maintenance costs.
- All commenters identifying themselves as owning property or living in Warm Spring Bay oppose the road and believe that a ferry terminal there will harm the community, businesses (which depend on the wild character and remoteness), recreation, tourism, fish runs, wildlife and beauty. There is concern that there is not room for a terminal because of land use patterns and geography. One commenter expresses fear that accommodating a terminal will require taking of homes/businesses.

## Kake/Petersburg Road

- Commenters find that this road will provide Kake better access to energy, less expensive goods and services, bring more tourists, and for these and additional reasons benefit the Kake economy with increased business and revenue while decreasing expenses.
- A concern expressed is that there will be no ferry terminal in Petersburg and traveling to/from South Mitkof will be challenging for walk-on passengers.

## Road Segments not in Alternative 5 or the Scoping Report

- Several comments ask about or request inclusion of specific road segments that are not in the Scoping Report:
  - Several commenters ask about including access roads to Canada, such as the Bradfield Canal Road and a link to the Cassiar Highway.
  - Some Hoonah commenters suggest Hoonah could be a Chichagof Island hub or an Icy and Chatham Strait ferry hub with (a) roads to/from Hoonah and Tenakee and (b) roads to/from Hoonah and Pelican. This would allow these ferry segments to be eliminated. From Hoonah there could be shuttle ferries to/from Juneau. A road to/from Hoonah and Pelican could also facilitate geothermal energy and an electrical intertie.
  - Some Angoon commenters suggest a road segment to/from Angoon and Young Bay or to the south end of the Island.
  - Some Prince of Wales Island residents mention that the SATP should include the need to build access roads to mines on Prince of Wales Island so residents and businesses can benefit from economic opportunities.

### **Preliminary Alternative 6 - No Action**

This is the default alternative if no actions are taken. It would take no steps to maintain or increase either frequency of service or capacity of the regional transportation system. Neither would steps be planned to reduce operation and maintenance costs. Instead, ferries would be retired without replacement when rising costs or insufficient funding dictates reduction in service or when ferries reach the end of their service lives.

This alternative was essentially dismissed as unacceptable and unrealistic during the meetings and very little conversation about it occurred. No comments were submitted on this alternative.

### **AMHS Walk-on Travelers** *(mostly, but not exclusively, about Berners Bay Terminal)*

- Many commenters oppose either the road/shuttle ferry concept, or, the Berners Bay, Katzehin, or Warm Bay Spring ferry terminal because of the impact to non-vehicle/ foot travelers. The cost and inconvenience of land transportation to/from communities and remotely located terminals for walk-on ferry travelers is mentioned as a concern between Haines and a Katzehin Terminal, Sitka and a Warm Spring Bay Terminal, and Juneau and a Berners Bay Terminal. The preponderance of comments focus on the Berners Bay Terminal.
- Public transport for walk-on ferry passengers to/from Juneau and the Auke Bay terminal is unreliable and taxis are expensive making commenters skeptical of the concept of transit between a Berners Bay terminal and Juneau.
- Several comments make the point that if the Berners Bay Terminal is built, there must be inexpensive or free transportation to/from Juneau and the terminal for foot travelers and, for traveler convenience, travelers should be able to reserve and purchase this bus/van ticket at the same time and place that ferry reservations are made.
- At public meetings it was suggested that land transportation between terminals will be a commercial opportunity, but commenters note that taxis would cost too much for travelers to afford and are skeptical that a commercial bus or van service could be profitable.

### **Fast Ferries**

- A few comments from Sitkans support fast ferries because they allow a faster trip to/from Sitka with reduced tidal constraints; another comment from Cordova supports fast ferries use in that area and credits them for reduced cost of living expenses. Several commenters ask about the status of the fast ferries or suggest selling them because they are not reliable in Southeast Alaska weather, require frequent maintenance, are fuel inefficient, or are uncomfortable in rough seas.

### **Population Estimates**

- Some commenters are skeptical about the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADOLWD) Southeast Alaska population estimates used in the Scoping Report and believe they are unduly pessimistic.

### **Frequency and Schedule of Ferry Service**

- Almost every community had one or more commenter express an interest in increased ferry service to and from their community. This is especially evident in Hoonah, where a petition was signed by about 500 residents for better service. Some comments had specific scheduling suggestions that would benefit their community.
- Some smaller community commenters specifically request an occasional (e.g. once/month) ferry run that would leave their town in the early morning and reach the hub community in time to allow appointments, services and shopping, and then be able to catch a return ferry later that same evening to their home. This would eliminate the need and expense of spending a night.

### **Freight on AMHS Ferries**

- Several comments from businesses address their dependence on AMHS ferries for freight. Some communities do not have any, or infrequent, barge service - especially in the winter.

### **Focus on Resident Travel Needs**

- Commenters offering opinions on priorities believe that ferry service should emphasize resident travel needs, and travel between communities within the region, especially convenient travel from smaller towns to hub communities (Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan). However, most comments received about Bellingham service also favor continuing it.

### **Independent Travelers on Ferries**

- Several comments cite the importance of the ferry in bringing independent travelers to/from Bellingham and then around Southeast Alaska. They note that ferries bring independent travelers who spend money in communities and positively impact the economy. Those with this opinion favor either Alternative 5, or, a predictable and regular ferry schedule (for consistent marketing and traveler planning).
- A few Sitka commenters speak against giving consideration to tourist use of ferries in decision-making, as they believe Lynn Canal service in the summer caters to tourists and if Lynn Canal service were reduced this would free up ferries to provide more frequent service to/from Sitka.

## **Cost Estimates**

- The primary cost-related comment was asking that the SATP identify the costs to travelers of alternatives; some note that cost is often the “bottom line” in their decision-making when travel choices are available. Tables 15 and 16 compare travel costs between Southeast and Seattle or Anchorage, but comparisons for individuals, families and teams that travel between Southeast communities should be included.
- Some commenters ask that an independent contractor prepare cost estimates.
- Commenters ask that SATP cost estimates include the revenues that ferries generate as part of operation and maintenance equation. A few commenters note the inequity and challenge of funding travel in Southeast Alaska because highways do not generate revenue while ferries do; this leads a few to request that State roads in Alaska be toll roads.
- Comments suggest that alternatives that include new roads explicitly identify the incremental increase in both road maintenance that will result and added public safety costs that either State or municipal governments will incur.
- A few comments note that much planning attention is devoted to keeping to 12-hour ferry runs due to the related labor costs. One question is about how much the labor savings would be if this is accomplished and is it worth the large capital costs for new roads and ferry terminals.

## **Community Economics**

- There are several comments about the relationship between access, the cost of living, and community economies. Comments generally are that the impact of the alternatives on jobs and local economies should be taken into consideration by ADOT&PF; that there is a cause and effect relationship between the frequency of ferry service and the economic vitality of communities – including population migration from small communities to hubs and vice versa; and that Alternative 5 will bring more traffic through small communities and improve their local economies, but also increase public safety costs for the State and municipalities.

## **Financially Realistic**

- Several comment that the new SATP should be financially realistic and set direction that can be accomplished within the 20 year plan timeframe. A few note that the capital costs to complete the 2004 SATP were so high that it was never attainable.

## **Fuel Consumption and Efficiency**

- Many commenters support new ferries that will provide increased fuel efficiency. [There is an assumption that the Alaska Class ferries will be more fuel efficient than the mainline ferries they will replace or the fast ferries.] One comment asks, “How does the Alaska Class Ferry fuel consumption compare to consumption of the ferries currently used?”

## **Other System Ideas**

- Ideas for Southeast Alaska’s transportation system offered by commenters that have not already been mentioned in this summary include:
  - Replace the three mainline ferries with identical Matanuska-size ferries, sell the fast ferries, and privatize rest of transportation system.
  - If ferry service to Bellingham is ended reinstitute ferry service to Hyder, which is another Alaskan port with connections to continental road system.
  - Dedicate the Kennicott to a Whittier-Juneau run.
  - Dedicate a ferry to a Juneau-Hoonah-Gustavus-Pelican run.
  - Partner with British Columbia and Washington state ferry system to provide service.
  - Include a Haines-Yukon-Fairbanks railroad line (primarily for freight)
  - Use fast ferries to connect smaller cities to larger ones (Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan) and take this burden off the mainliners. Larger ferries then can provide better north-south and village service.
  - Have one mainliner to run through the region and use day boats to connect communities.

## **Add Reliable and Safe Transportation to Purpose and Need**

- Many commenters understand and agree that achieving a more financially sustainable system is a top priority. Some commenters suggest that an additional Purpose and Need (pg 20) should be to maintain a safe and reliable transportation system.
  - Some believe an emphasis on safe and reliable travel disfavors roads (Alternative 5 and Lynn Canal Highway); others believe this disfavors ferry types that are not or will not be able to operate reliably in Southeast sea/weather conditions (shuttle ferries, fast ferries); still others mean that ferries are often safer than small aircraft travel in Southeast Alaska.
- A few comment that the Department’s mission, “to provide for the movement of people and goods and the delivery of State services” (pg 1) is not being fully considered

because the alternatives focus on vehicles only (capacity) to the exclusion of foot passengers and goods/freight.

### **Clarification Requested**

- Individual comments asked for specific clarifications or additional data as follows:
  - Table 8 for Alternative 4 indicates that when only a single Alaska Class ferry is in operation, the summertime Kake-Sitka run would be eliminated even though a comparison of Tables 3 & 11 indicate that during this time period, all vessels of the entire current fleet would continue to be in operation. Why would having an additional boat mean a reduction in service?
  - Table 11 [9] indicates a significant drop in service between Sitka and Juneau (both summer and winter, but particularly the latter) and elimination of the wintertime Juneau-Petersburg route, compared to Table 1, which deploys fewer boats.
  - Table 11 for Alternative 4 includes a new Berners Bay terminal that would presumably result in more vehicle traffic on the state-maintained road between Berners Bay and Auke Bay or Juneau, yet it appears that no additional road maintenance has been budgeted in Table 11.
  - Table 13 for Alternative 5 includes the construction of the Juneau Access Road and Petersburg-Kake Road, does the 14% increase in maintenance funding on Table 13 include these roads?
  - The frequency of service to Sitka listed in the Scoping Report is not accurate. This makes it hard to compare Alternative 1 to other alternatives since it is unclear if the service forecasted under the other alternatives is similarly misrepresented.
  - Table 15: Add costs to comparing travel within region of alternatives, and, add travel option/costs for an AMHS walk-on passenger who rents a vehicle at the destination.
  - Table 16: Like Table 15, add data showing costs for travel by a family or group to Table 16, omission of this data makes AMHS option look more expensive.
  - How is traffic demand estimated; what does it include and not include? Define excess capacity.
  - Pg 10 states that..."economic data have not indicated that transportation constraints are hampering development." This seems at odds with statement on pg 45 that Alternative 5 will benefit communities by increasing, "...demand for tourist and recreational services." Would like to see citations and economic data.
  - A new airport in Angoon will be built in 2016 yet there does not seem to be an increase shown for airport operating and maintenance costs.



## **“Official” Comment Summary**

Summarized briefly here are timely comments received from municipal or tribal governments (either on letterhead or an adopted resolution) and the Marine Transportation Advisory Board.

### **City of Gustavus**

Continue ability to use the AMHS for transporting vehicles safely between Southeast Alaska and the Lower 48 during the winter when driving conditions on the highway are the most difficult. Support Alternative 2 which seeks to manage ferry fleet capacity in a way that more closely matches current and future traffic demand and appears best to preserve flexibility for long-haul service both seasonally and in the future as demand changes.

### **City of Kake**

Support Alternative 5, including the Kake-Petersburg Road because the economic benefits would include reduced freight costs, increased commerce between Kake and Petersburg, and improved access to medical services.

### **Organized Village of Kake**

Support Alternative 5, including the Kake-Petersburg Road because it will lead to sustainable economic development in Kake. The City of Kake and Organized Village of Kake can work together to maintain this road segment.

### **City and Borough of Sitka**

Maintain Bellingham Ferry service. The independent traveler portion of Sitka's visitor industry is significant and dependent on this ferry route.

Ferry capacity needs to be considered for each specific route when capacity reduction is being considered. Furthermore, even if each route is considered individually, if the demand of the average week of the peak month is all the capacity that is provided, then the service won't be adequate for half of that month. This is not acceptable.

The proposed Warm Spring Bay Road could connect Sitka with all mainline ferries. This would increase service and travel time. This project needs to be further studied to include a detailed siting analysis, economic analysis, transportation analysis, and updated project estimate to

determine if it is a feasible project. This road would also provide access to the proposed Takatz Lake Hydroelectric project thereby greatly reducing development costs.

The plan needs to address the two projects which are already under development - Lynn Canal Highway and the first Alaska Class Ferry.

The plan should include a demand forecast and analysis of possible redeployment of the existing fleet to better serve the communities of Southeast Alaska.

The Scoping Report fails to recognize that decreasing ferry service will increase other modes of transportation, which would trigger higher maintenance costs for these systems. For example, Table 5 and Table 7 do not recognize that decreased ferry service will increase air traffic and trigger an increase in airport maintenance costs; however no added airport costs over Table 1 are shown.

The Scoping Report paid little attention to the needs of walk on passengers, which outnumber vehicles. This is especially important in small communities where many residents don't own vehicles.

A convenient schedule that doesn't produce long layovers can be a greater benefit than increased ferry service. An increase in ferry service can cause an increase in demand, and vice versa.

Sitka's economic well-being depends of having improved fast ferry access to Juneau. SEARHC headquarters are located here and it is important for the patients to have increased access. SEARHC's patient base and the general Southeast Alaska population is aging, requiring increasing medical attention. This could cause additional demands on portions of the transportation network.

The Basic Tenets (pgs 21-22) state that since all communities have float plane access they have access to the most basic level of transportation. This doesn't take into account the weather in southeast and the unreliability of float planes. Another tenet should be added that states that ferry service is less likely to be disrupted by weather than air service.

In addition, to the comments above, Sitka's letter asks for a number of clarifications to data in tables and points out matters that seem inaccurate. These comments are captured elsewhere in this report.

## City of Thorne Bay

Directing travelers through Prince of Wales Island would be great for the local economy. However, it would be inconvenient for thorough travelers. Maintain ferry service to Bellingham,

Alaskans shouldn't have to travel through Canada to go to the Lower 48. The drive takes just as long as the ferry ride and requires a passport and inspections and some travelers (such as those carrying weapons or with DUIs) cannot legally pass through Canada and would be forced to fly. The Bellingham ferry also is used by tourists.

The SATP should include an economic impact analysis.

In alternative 5, it seems logical to construct a ferry terminal in Thorne Bay, rather than having the ferries in both Coffman Cove and Hollis; this would require one less terminal and ferry and less staff.

### **Marine Transportation Advisory Board**

The MTAB position is to retain both the Bellingham and cross-gulf ferry routes, construct an additional (second) Alaska Class ferry and one mainliner replacement ferry, consider a Berners Bay ferry terminal that includes public transportation to support walk-on ferry passengers, and fund design of the Sitka-Warm Spring road. Road links should be built where appropriate and possible in order to shorten ferry runs and create an efficient transportation system.

## **NEXT STEPS**

ADOT&PF will use comments received on the Scoping report and other work to assist it in refining the transportation alternatives, identifying a Preferred Alternative, and in preparing the Draft SATP (tentatively scheduled for spring 2012). After the Draft SATP is issued, ADOT&PF intends to conduct another round of public outreach and seek comments. Issuance of the Final SATP is expected in late 2012.