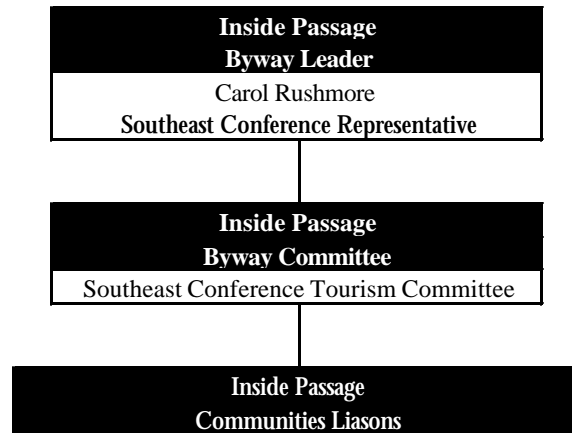


REGION'S CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES



INSIDE PASSAGE SEGMENT COMMITTEE



3

REGION'S CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Representatives from the various communities along this segment of the byway gathered together for a three-day byway summit to discuss directions for the *Inside Passage* segment. The following are key ideas generated by the group regarding how their area and the byway as a whole should proceed and function. These ideas form the foundation for many of the recommendations that follow in Section 4, *Actions*.



The M/V LeConte in the fishing community of Pelican. This community only gets monthly service but is a great one day loop trip from Juneau.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

A central challenge for this segment — and for the others — is how to organize the byway effort in an efficient way. Most of the individuals who will participate in the byway are already members of many other organizations and have many other commitments. Their work plates are often full to overflowing. How then should the byway - which everyone acknowledged is an important effort - be wedged into people's schedules? How should it be managed and pushed forward without overburdening participants?

Harbor seals lounging on a navigation aid along the Inside Passage route.



Workshop attendees agreed that there needs to be an organization representing the entire byway as well as an organizational structure for each segment. The approach should be one that overlays existing organizations and meetings as much as possible. Potential models or umbrella organizations include Southeast Alaska Tourism Council, SEATrails, Southeast Conference, and the Alaska Municipal League. In all cases, the organizational structure needs to provide opportunities for all communities, Native corporations and other byway partners to have a say in policy making but in a manner that allows the organization to move effectively and make decisions efficiently.

An important organizational issue noted by the group was to have at least one local spokesperson identified for each community to help spread the word and explain the program to residents and business people. In addition, the group emphasized that discussions and explanations about the byway discussion need to avoid becoming enmeshed in Marine Highway scheduling issues, which is often a topic of concern in communities. The byway is unrelated to scheduling decisions and that fact should be made clear.

Another important issue discussed was the need to link the byway — which is economic development-related — with other more traditional economic development organizations. Unless outreach and awareness building are done, these other groups may not see the byway as a natural partner. This issue should be resolved through the appropriate designation of individuals who represent both a byway partner and a traditional economic development entity. These individuals will then act as the conduit of information between the byway and other agencies and political groups.

The Corridor Partnership Plan presented an organizational chart that was discussed by this group. Attendees at the Southeast workshop felt that the chart had merit, but that more thinking and discussion would be necessary before specific recommendations could be made regarding how it should be adjusted. The latest version of organizational thinking for the Southeast region and the other segments is presented below.

The byway effort needs to focus on activities that link byway communities with the onboard corridor experience. The Marine Highway is a stakeholder in the byway process, but will continue to operate and schedule independently from byway development activities.

It is important to change current marine highway names from *Southcentral*, *Southwest* and *Southeast* to names that mesh with existing tourism promotion. For example, names should shift to *the Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula*, *Kodiak and the Aleutians* and the *Inside Passage*.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: CUSTOMER SERVICE

The next challenge discussed at the workshop was customer service. Typical questions facing most travelers include, ‘The schedule is complicated. Can it be made simpler?’, ‘When ships come in late, where does the visitor wait?’, ‘How do they get to the terminals?’, ‘What do they do with bags?’, and ‘How can they get to town?’ Despite the inherent appeal of Alaska’s Marine Highway to many travelers, there are practical impediments that can make it a difficult buying decision or can spoil the enjoyment for a traveler during the course of their vacation.

It should be noted that all participants in the workshop understand the history of Alaska’s Marine Highway and its primary mission of serving Alaska’s coastal communities and thus the reasons why the system is not fully oriented toward the leisure traveler. Nonetheless, it was agreed that if Alaska’s Marine Highway is serious about gaining more leisure travel customers, it must address these basic customer service challenges without sacrificing the needs of the port communities.

Related to the above, some participants feel there is also a need for more customer service awareness building and tourism employee education within communities. Currently, the Alaska Department of Commerce and Community and Economic Development sponsor the AlaskaHost Program that provides hospitality training to workers in the travel and leisure industries. The one day training sessions are offered at various locations and at various times throughout the state. This program or one similar may work well for those who provide customer service along the byway.

A passenger looks up a valley that was carved out by a glacier that is still visible in the background.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: MARKETING

Marketing was a major topic of discussion with the *Inside Passage* workshop participants. The challenges cited range from how Alaska's Marine Highway System is perceived by travelers to the details on the need for schedule changes. Generally speaking, there were two primary objectives that drove the discussions:

1. Travelers must be encouraged to get on and off the ships more frequently and stay longer in communities.
2. Travelers must be encouraged to return to visit in the future.

Better than a revolving restaurant. Passengers enjoy dinner while the ever changing landscape slides by.



Marketing the Communities

The general consensus among participants is that most travelers spend little time exploring the communities and their surroundings. Given sometimes awkward times of arrival and departure, short time in port for some communities, lack of information on what one can do in many communities, lack of public or private transportation into towns and other hurdles, many travelers just look over the ship's railings at the terminals and do not get off and explore. This limits the potential appeal of Alaska's Marine Highway as a way to 'see the real Alaska' and it limits the economic impact for local communities and Native villages. Out of the three segments, the Inside Passage has the greatest opportunity to get travelers into the communities. This is possible due to the number of ships serving this segment and the ability to get off one ship and board another the next day or two, as the schedule permits. Some communities see daily service while others such as Pelican only have a Marine Highway ship call in monthly. The Marine Highway will allow passengers to disembark at one community and continue their trip on another ship without occurring additional charges provided the stop-overs are ticketed. This requires a good understanding of the schedule.

Organized and available information were the two challenges most often cited for this objective. Information on itineraries, ways to conveniently explore the communities, transportation and all other travel related issues must be more accessible to the traveler. This begins with a schedule that makes ship-side and land-side travel planning easier and continues with the provision of more information on communities to travelers at both terminals and on-board the ships. The details of how this might be accomplished are presented in *Section 4, Actions*.

Marketing Return Trips

Encouraging travelers to return for another trip can be accomplished during the sailing or by post-trip marketing activity. Obviously, the state and all destination-marketing organizations encourage people to return to Alaska in the future, but there are opportunities for Alaska's Marine Highway to be seen by the traveler as a preferred mode for seeing the various regions of the state. First, the three region breakdown of the system — the *Inside Passage*, *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula* and *Kodiak and the Aleutians*— lends itself to encouraging return trips; for example, “*You haven't seen Alaska until you've seen all of Alaska's Marine Highway*”. Defining itineraries at the regional level then becomes a way to both encourage people to stay longer within a given region as well as sending the message that one must return another time to sample another part of Alaska's Marine Highway system.

Some terminals such as the one in Skagway has a well thoughtout theme that creates an enjoyable space for passengers to learn about the community.



International Marketing

Finally, Alaska's Marine Highway receives many international visitors already and a part of its annual marketing program is to reach these travelers. Therefore, designation of the Marine Highway as an All-American Road will not take the Marine Highway into unfamiliar waters; instead, the designation will help attract even more international visitors by making more non-U.S. citizens aware of Alaska's Marine Highway as one of American's premier byway destinations.

Currently, Alaska's Marine Highway markets to international travelers by attending the major travel and tourism trade shows for both individual and group tourism. Journalists are invited to travel and write about the Marine Highway for foreign publications. Cooperative ads are also taken out in conjunction with the Alaska Travel Industry Association. The Marine Highway website is also an effective marketing and communication means for non-U.S. visitors. Finally, the central reservations staff handles calls and inquiries from all over the world each year and provides some multilingual services.

In the future, Alaska's Marine Highway hopes to take advantage of any international marketing efforts that the National Scenic Byways Program pursues. If funds are available, it will also be important to produce more materials in other languages for international visitors. Signage, interpretation and other materials would be additional objectives for translation or upgrading using international pictographic symbols.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

This section reviews the basic Marine Highway terminals and ships, as well as landside transportation and port community facility challenges and opportunities. Improvements are suggested for the region in general and then for each terminal and community in Chapter 4, *Actions*.



The M/V LeCorte sails past the icefields of Glacier Bay that could be a very marketable return trip to the area.

INSIDE PASSAGE TERMINAL CHALLENGES

The Marine Highway provides an important alternative to expensive air transportation and is utilized by both residents and visitors alike. Only a few communities are linked by road to the mainland and for those that are not, the only access is by air or water. For passengers, the terminal is their first destination and opportunity to get local orientation about the community they are visiting. As a result, some terminals have evolved beyond waiting rooms and a place to purchase tickets into welcome centers, interpretive centers, event spaces, shelters from inclement weather and community centers. On the other hand, some communities along this segment are so small they have very limited facilities. For many smaller coastal communities, the Alaska's Marine Highway facility is the primary gateway to their community. For other port communities, the terminals are located several miles from the community and are isolated. Thus the following section describing the terminals is critical.

The Alaska's Marine Highway terminal facilities vary greatly from community to community from no terminal building with only a marine ramp to access the ships, to large terminals with visitor centers, internet kiosks and surrounded by a pleasant park setting. Typically, the larger the port community, the larger the terminal and the amount of visitor services provided at the terminal. Each terminal has its own manager and is independently responsible for providing visitor services for the terminal. As a result, each terminal is unique and throughout the system there is a lack of visitor service consistency between terminals. This creates local flare and color but results in some information services not being provided, others duplicated and some of the potential 'corridor stories' not being told.

Most visitor services at the terminals are the result of partnerships with local visitor and convention bureaus, state and federal agencies and local organizations. Typically, larger communities with more partnership opportunities have more interpretation and visitor information in the terminals. Visitor services in smaller terminals may be as simple as paper maps taped to the walls while larger terminals may have interactive touch screen information kiosks and visitor information staff to meet the ships while in port. In all terminals, the Marine Highway staff fills the role of providing outstanding visitor information to its passengers, when time is available outside of selling tickets or loading the ships.

The M/V Lituya is a newer ship that was put into service to meet the demand for daily service to Metlakatla.



General Challenges for Terminals and Port Communities

The *Inside Passage* segment has sixteen ports serving a variety of communities ranging from a population of 100 to large cities of nearly 80,000. The following outlines general challenges for the ports.

- Some of the smallest communities have no terminal or even a sheltered waiting area. The Marine Highway should provide basic shore side shelter in each community. Many of these smaller communities have no or very little visitor information for passengers once they arrive.
 - Some terminals/dock facilities are located several miles out of the town center and are isolated. Many of these isolated terminals have no visitor services in close proximity to the terminals and require transportation into the community to meet passenger needs including food, lodging, or visitor information.
 - Most terminals have an interpretation area ranging from paper maps to interactive kiosks that discusses the port communities serviced by the Marine Highway and the areas traversed by the ships. This information varies from terminal to terminal and needs to be expanded, updated and unified.
- Many travelers who use the Marine Highway travel by foot, while some bring kayaks, or bicycles on the ships. The ships accommodate these alternative modes of travel, however many port communities do not provide services for them at the terminal. Reliable transportation from the terminal to the community by bus, taxi or van varies from port to port and can often depend on when the ship is in port. Transportation can be non-existent when it is needed the most (ie, in the middle of the night).
 - People that have a vehicle on board are reluctant to disembark with their vehicle and explore the community while the ship is in port and then re-board due to fear of missing the ship or simply not knowing it can be done. As a result passengers with vehicles often stay on board while in port until they reach their final destination.
 - Many terminals are purely functional with a terminal surrounded by a large parking lot sometimes in an industrial area. For many communities the terminal is the gateway to their community and needs to be a pleasant place to enter the community, wait for the ship and provide 'people places' where property size exists.
 - Almost all terminals are only open two hours prior and up to two hours after a ship is in port. This can sometimes result in difficulty in getting information on sailings, purchasing tickets and learning about other port communities.

You get to enjoy your trip and see a lot more when someone else does the driving for you.



TERMINAL SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The following information analyzes the facilities at each terminal and its challenges that must be overcome and opportunities to be utilized. It is assumed that communities with terminal buildings provide a ticket counter, restrooms, public telephone, seating, pamphlet racks for local tours and attractions and a map of the community, unless otherwise noted. Section 4, *Action* provides a detailed set of recommendations for terminal and related physical improvements.

Bellingham, WA

This is the largest terminal in the system and provides the most visitor services making it a great start to traveling on the Marine Highway. The modern terminal includes a manned visitor center for all port calls providing information about Washington, Alaska, British Columbia and the Marine Highway. This is a great service that should be provided at all major gateways to the Marine Highway. Maps, charts and interpretation panels are few in the terminal and there is little opportunity for gaining information without the assistance from the manned visitor center desk. Numerous well stocked pamphlet racks line two walls of the terminal. Local lodging information is provided including a direct dial reservation phone. Passengers can visit the terminal café that provides light meals and breakfasts or the gift shop that sells magazines, film, souvenirs, toiletries and clothing to make your trip more enjoyable. Rotating art work decorates the terminal walls. The waiting area is spacious and offers outstanding views of the bay and surrounding port. Other facilities include bicycle racks, lockers, and covered waiting areas. The waterfront surrounding the terminal is a pleasant urban waterfront with patios and a variety of seating to enjoy the waterfront or listen to live music on weekends in the summer. In close proximity to the terminal is open space, kayak launching facilities and numerous shops, restaurants and galleries. Taxis and private carriers meet every ship. This is the only terminal that is open five days a week plus days that a Marine Highway ship calls into port. It is operated by the Port of Bellingham.

The Port of Bellingham is a large modern terminal with many services.



Prince Rupert, BC

This is a large terminal combined with a US/Canada Customs Facility that passengers must clear before entering the terminal and boarding the ships, and exit upon disembarking at Prince Rupert. This terminal is a major gateway to the Marine Highway. The terminal includes several laminated paper maps including USDA Forest Service recreation opportunities in the Tongass National Forest, maps of Alaska, and Southeast Alaska. Artwork and mounted animals including a bear, eagle and others can be found throughout the terminal but without interpretation. The exterior of the terminal includes a few benches and a small paved patio space. The terminal is located 2 miles from the city center and a recreation area is found one mile from the terminal. The nearest visitor services are approximately 1.5 miles away and are accessible by a paved shoulder and intermittent sidewalks. A private shuttle service provides intermittent transportation during the summer and no service during the remainder of the year.

Prince Rupert's Cow Bay is known for its black and white color scheme and collection of galleries, coffee shops and restaurants.



Ketchikan

This community has a large terminal with most services. The terminal has four interpretive panels provided by the USDA Forest Service that discuss the resources of the Tongass National Forest, wilderness opportunities, Native culture and their use of the Forest, and the timber industry. These panels provide a good introduction to the Tongass National Forest. The terminal provides an internet kiosk, phone card vending, direct dial phone for lodging in Ketchikan and a television that typically shows a video called "Welcome to the Marine Highway" in the summer. The terminal also has several display cases containing old historic items related to the Marine Highway including old schedules, models of boats and tickets to name a few. This is an interesting display but with very little interpretation. The Inter-Island Ferry Service shares the space with the Marine Highway where queries and tickets can be purchased for ferry service to neighboring Prince of Wales Island. Seating includes bench style seating as well as tables and chairs for families. The terminal is surrounded by a very large paved area and pedestrian circulation can be difficult. Private transportation meets most ships. Kayaks can be launched from the terminal area although actual launch facilities do not exist. Visitor services are found in the immediate vicinity of the terminal with the terminal approximately 2 miles from the town center. Sidewalks and intermittent bike lanes provide access to the city center.

Wrangell

This is a small terminal with limited paper maps of the coastline and Forest Service recreation opportunities in the Tongass National Forest. The terminal includes a Tlingit carving and mounted king salmon but without interpretation. The terminal offers books and toys for children to play with in the terminal. The exterior space includes a bike rack, open picnic facilities and a large grass area for short term camping. The terminal is located in the city center and is connected by sidewalks. Visitor services are found in the immediate vicinity of the terminal.

Petersburg

This mid sized terminal has many of the features of the larger terminals with local character. The terminal has several maps of the community and has partnered with the Forest Service to provide geological interpretation of the area and its culture. The terminal is decorated by a rotating art display of the Marine Highway ships created by local school children. The terminal includes a 'take a book; leave a book' library for ship passengers. The terminal is surrounded by a small waterfront park with picnic benches, kayak launch facilities and bicycle storage. Forest Service interpretive panels depicting the area's rich history and recreation opportunities are planned for the exterior of the terminal in 2005. The terminal is working with the local Clausen Museum to set up dioramas and displays of local cultural artifacts and art. Locally, there is also the desire to install a small visitor center with an attendant. Visitor services are located as close as across the road for food and accommodation. The terminal is less than a mile from the city center and is accessed by sidewalks and a widened shoulder.

Kake

This small community does not have a terminal building and is limited to a marine ramp to access the ships. The terminal area is located on the outskirts of town and the nearest visitor services are approximately a mile away. There are no sidewalks and access to town is by a paved shoulder. Many of the aforementioned general terminal improvements are not realistic for this facility.

Sitka

This community has a mid sized terminal with many of the basis visitor services. The terminal includes several varieties of salmon found in the Sitka area mounted on the walls without interpretation. Several laminated maps are found on the wall including Forest Service recreation opportunities and marine charts. The exterior of the terminal includes a bike rack and benches. The terminal is 13 miles from the city center with the nearest visitor services located approximately 9 miles from the terminal. Abundant Forest Service recreation facilities and a National Park, including a kayak ramp, are found less than one mile from the terminal. Access to the community center and nearby historic and recreational facilities is by intermittent paved shoulders and sidewalks. A private bus carrier meets almost all ships during the summer months and many of the sailings during non-tourism season.

Angoon

This is a small community with limited visitor services in a small building converted to a makeshift terminal. There are very limited visitor services at this terminal beyond tickets sales, restrooms and a public phone. The terminal is located 2.5 miles from town and pedestrian and bicycle traffic gains access by a paved shoulder.

Each ship has a cart that will take your luggage on and off the ships and to the terminal.



Downtown Juneau with Mount Juneau in the background.



Tenakee Springs

Due to the community's small population of just over 100 inhabitants this community does not have a terminal building. The docking area is comprised of a covered waiting area at the head of the marine ramp and is located in the center of the community. The community does not allow passenger vehicles or trucks. The general store at the end of the dock is the local source for visitor information.

Hoonah

This is a small terminal with many basic services. The nearest visitor services are less than a half mile from the terminal with the town center approximately one mile. This terminal has several local displays related to the community and Native culture and takes pride in its local school sports program. The sports teams typically travel on the Marine Highway and therefore many posters in the terminal support the Hoonah teams. The terminal is appropriately sized but much could be done to interpret the Native culture of this Tlingit community. Hoonah has recently welcomed the cruiseship industry by establishing the Icy Strait tourism destination with many attractions and interpretation opportunities but this is only open to cruiseship passengers. The terminal is linked to the town center by a sidewalk.

Auke Bay (Juneau)

This is a large terminal with many services and makes it perhaps one of the best for the level and variety of services it provides. This terminal has a visitor center within the waiting area designed to be serviced by a volunteer. It is manned by the Juneau Visitor and Convention Bureau for approximately 70% of all ship calls in the summer but is seldom hosted from September to April. Its current design makes it difficult to use without the presence of an attendant. This is a great visitor service that should be expanded

year round or the visitor center modified to be successful without an attendant. This terminal also has two touch screen kiosks that are hosted by the City of Whitehorse and partnered with the Alaska's Marine Highway. Although these kiosks are very basic, they provide good information for visitors about the Marine Highway, the port communities of Southeast and the Yukon Territory. These could be easily upgraded to provide a more interactive experience with more detail. The USDA Forest Service has an interpretive panel about the Tongass National Forest and the City of Juneau has a basic map of Juneau at the terminal. New to the terminal is an internet kiosk allowing passengers access to e-mail and the Internet. All these features provide outstanding visitor services, however there is no continuity between the various services which are each installed by different agencies or organizations creating a haphazard appearance and not ensuring all information services are provided. The terminal provides a direct dial reservation kiosk for lodging in Juneau. A private carrier offers bus service into town and meets most all ships in summer but provides intermittent service during other months. The terminal also contains a covered picnic area, small landscaped area, bicycle racks and a food wagon selling burgers and other fast foods on the terminal property. The next nearest visitor services are approximately 3 miles and city center is 12 miles. Recreation facilities can be found 2 miles to the north. Pedestrians and cyclists travel on a widened shoulder along Glacier Highway shared by a wide array of users.

Pelican

Pelican has a small population of just over 100 people and lacks a terminal. The dock and marine ramp are located in the center of the community. The dock is located in the community center and many basic services are located in close proximity.

Haines

This is a mid sized terminal with many basic services and is a major gateway to and from the Marine Highway due to its road connection with the Haines Highway. This terminal contains one diorama that is built into the terminal wall but there is no interpretation to the animals on display. A wildlife viewing opportunities map provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is located next to the diorama and could be incorporated into the display. The map is for all of Southeast Alaska and might be more appropriate if it listed opportunities for the Skagway area as this map is already located on many of the ships. A large pamphlet area dominates the terminal and is somewhat haphazard and unaesthetic but has plenty of information. The terminal also has a TV for showing videos but is typically not operating. The terminal also has a direct phone line for local hotels and businesses. The exterior of the terminal includes a small grass area with two tent platforms and a local business sells burgers and other food to south of terminal (seasonal). The nearest visitor services and town center are greater than 5 miles and is accessed by a paved shoulder. Recreation facilities are 3 miles from the terminal.

Vehicles await loading at the Haines ferry terminal while the ship is tied up in the background.



Skagway

A mid sized terminal with many visitor services and is also a major gateway to the Marine Highway due to its road connection with the Klondike Highway. This terminal is perhaps one of the best appointed of all the mid sized terminals. The Skagway terminal has one of the few integrated and unified interpretation areas and this is attributed largely by the efforts of the National Park Service. Large color murals of the historic Skagway architecture, old photographs, maps and other artifacts of Skagway decorate two of the terminal walls. These panels have limited interpretation and could be easily expanded to create an outstanding display. Part of the display includes a map of the community that provides good basic information but is a little small and not ADA friendly for people in wheelchairs. The terminal is well laid out and has a variety of seating including bench seating and table and chairs for family seating. The terminal also has a well stocked pamphlet rack, magazine rack, book a borrow area, and vending machines. The terminal also has an internet kiosk and phone card machine that is popular when working. Skagway has one of the few covered walkways directly from the terminal building to boat dock providing good protection from Skagway's often windy environment. The terminal is located in industrial port area with a small park in close proximity for waiting. The nearest visitor services and town center is a 1/4 mile from the terminal.

The largest ship in the fleet, the M/V Columbia.



ALASKA'S MARINE HIGHWAY SHIP OPPORTUNITIES

This section reviews the status and potential improvement challenges for the ships that serves this region. Seven ships service the *Inside Passage* and include five mainline ships, one shuttle ship and one fast ferry ship. The mainline fleet includes the *M/V Kennicott*, the *M/V LeConte*, the *M/V Matanuska*, the *M/V Malaspina*, and the *M/V Columbia*. Last year the Marine Highway put the *M/V Lituya* into service as a daily shuttle ship between Matlakatla and Ketchikan. Also in 2004, the system introduced the *M/V Fairweather* its newest class of ship, a high speed catamaran that reduces travel time by 50%. All ships have the capacity to carry walk on passengers and vehicles including kayaks, bicycles, motorcycles and larger vehicles including RVs, tour buses and trucks carrying freight. All ships provide a variety of services including food service, restrooms, a variety of seating opportunities, vending machines, information services (purser's desk), and have ADA facilities including restrooms, public showers, seating and dining areas. The larger mainline ships provide more services and include observation areas, free public showers, towel and linden service, a lounge (bar), children play areas, quiet areas, TV lounges, and private stateroom for an additional fee. All ships with staterooms have rooms that meet ADA requirements. Elevators and stairs provide access the various deck levels on the ships. The following information analyzes the individual ships while section 4, *Action* provides a detailed set of recommendations for the fleet and related physical improvements.

M/V Aurora

The Aurora is the smallest of the mainline fleet with a length of 235 feet and serves many of the smaller communities within the Inside Passage on the Community Link Routes. As a result it only has basic services and does not have an interpreter on board or staterooms. It also serves as a back up ship and can be found throughout the system but typically serves the Inside Passage. It is almost identical to the LeConte.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 300

Vehicles: 34

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria Located at the rear of the ship this basic cafeteria can accommodate approximately 80 people with a combination of bench seating and fixed tables and chairs. Due to the small size of the ship the cafeteria also contains video games and vending machines and is a popular area to sit as it is the only area on board with tables. As a result it can be crowded and noisy.

Forward Lounge A small forward viewing area with good views. Recliner seating for approximately 100 people. There is no USDA Forest Service interpretative desk on this ship.

TV Lounge A small recliner lounge for approximately 75 passengers with one large TV for showing movies while underway. This is a popular sleeping area at night.

Solarium This ship has a heated solarium at the rear of the ship with direct access to the ship decks. A large deck to the aft connects to the solarium and provide good open air viewing and tenting.

Purser Area A very small purser deck is located in the main lobby of the ship deck with limited interpretation. The area has pamphlet racks, marine mammal identification charts, a satellite phone and calling card machine.

Interpretation Interpretation is limited on this boat. The Aurora is typically used by residents moving from one small community to another and has few visitors traveling on it. However, visitors who wish to see the communities served by this ship should be provided with more information. Since this ship sails the same route, interpretation could be developed specifically for its route. The ship has several prints and historic artifacts related to the Aurora on board but with little interpretation.

The M/V Aurora arriving in Angoon.



M/V Columbia

The Columbia is the largest ship in the fleet at over 400 feet and was put into service in 1974. It provides the most on board visitor services in the entire fleet.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 971

Vehicles: 134

Four berth cabins: 45

Two berth cabins: 59

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria: Capacity for approximately 120 with good window views at the rear of the ship and better than typical cafeteria food including daily specials.

Restaurant: A full service restaurant with more specials and dining opportunities than cafeteria. Comfortable seating with great views from the aft of ship. This is the only ship with a restaurant on board.

Forward Lounge: Large recliner style seating area with great viewing of the passing landscape. Large USDA Forest Service interpretation area with many posters and maps but area is too small for demand. Also includes an electronic touch screen kiosk for Southeast Alaska and the Yukon Territory tourism information.

TV Lounge: Large lounge with recliner style seating for approximately 100. It has one large TV and lockers at rear of room. Movies are typically shown in this area during the sailing.

Solarium: Two covered solariums on board with only one being heated. Deck chairs and lounge chairs can be in short demand during peak season and good weather. Three large aft decks can be used for tenting or enjoying scenery in good weather. This ship has the most outdoor deck space.

Lounge (bar): Very large adult lounge area with seating for over 100. Bar has a dance floor and funky retro décor from the 1960s. Includes limited bar food, music, video games. Very limited views from the lounge area. This is the only interior space on any of the ships that allows smoking and is relatively smoke free due to effective ventilation.

Purser Area: A large area with numerous maps, charts and displays. Includes a large TV screen linked to the ship's GPS showing the ships location. Very popular but only shows nautical information. Area includes ice machine, mailbox, pamphlet, satellite phone and phone card vending machine.

Games Room: Adequate game room with video machines and play area. Popular area for families with children.

Gift Shop: Mid sized with many items including books, games, souvenirs and toiletries. Largest in the fleet.

Interpretation: The GPS link in the purser area is very popular. The ship has numerous displays, art work, and maps but with no or very limited interpretation of what is being displayed. Quality is good but better examples can be found on other boats such as the *M/V Fairweather* or *M/V Matanuska*. Information is not displayed in a logical manner and creates a 'treasure hunt' to find information.

Miscellaneous: This ship also has several smaller seating areas throughout, has numerous public showers and even a self service Laundromat.

The M/V Columbia



M/V Fairweather

This high speed catamaran is the newest vessel in the fleet and serves as a day boat making single trips from Juneau to Haines, Skagway and Sitka. Since it does not travel at night there are no berth cabins on board and limited food service. It is well laid out with very few interior walls creating an open well lit space with good viewing in all areas. The *M/V Fairweather* cuts travel time in half compared to the rest of the fleet, making it very popular.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 250

Vehicles: 36

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria: A small self service cafeteria with limited hot food and no kitchen. There is no designated cafeteria seating and people are welcome to eat throughout the ship.

Forward Lounge: This is a mid sized recliner lounge with great viewing. It seats approximately 70 people and is also where the USDA Forest Service does its interpretation presentations. Oddly, the interpretation area is to the rear of the ship and limits the program. Several TVs are located in this area for showing interpretation videos.

Central Lounge: This is the largest space on the ship and includes the cafeteria in the central portion. The lounge has a variety of seating ranging from small café style tables and chairs, to tables and benches for groups and families. Approximately 120 people can utilize this area. Amenities also include exceptional Alaskan artwork on the walls, a display area with original high quality Native art, TV monitors to show videos, a small interpretation area to the aft and a purser area. To the rear of the lounge is a small but adequate play area.

Solarium: The ship has a small solarium with limited fixed seating that is undersized for peak travel times and good weather. Limited deck chairs are also available. Camping is not permitted on this ship.

Purser Area: This area is small but meets the needs of passengers. It has limited information posted but the crew is helpful. The purser area runs the state of the art sound and video system that controls each of the dozen TV monitors. This area also has a satellite phone and baggage storage area.

Interpretive Area: The ship has one of the few dedicated interpretive areas that does not also serve as a Forest Service storage/presentation area. The area provides a pamphlet area, maps, charts. Maps are changed based on sailing routes. This area is not a manned station and provides one location for a majority of material on board making it convenient.

Interpretation: This ship is well set up for providing outstanding interpretation with its numerous monitors throughout the ship and state of the art system. Numerous videos can be played simultaneously but shown on individual monitors allowing several controlled presentations to occur at the same time. The ship has a limited number of presentations and results in passengers seeing the same videos time and time again if they are a regular rider. The sound system is very good and can be individually controlled throughout the ship. When presentations are not being shown the location of the ship is shown via the ship's GPS. Due to the lack of storage space for the Forest Service Interpreter presentations are limited. The crew is the most helpful and friendly of all ships.

The M/V Fairweather with the Eagle Glacier in the background.



M/V Kennicott

This is the newest mainline ship and was brought into service in 2001. It has many modern conveniences and facilities.

Passengers: 748

Vehicles: 80

Four berth cabins: 51

Three berth cabins: 34

Two berth cabins: 59

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria: The ship has a large cafeteria with modern kitchen facilities providing a good variety of food including a salad bar, sandwich bar, hot foods and daily specials. The seating area provides adequate viewing from the ship and seats approximately 120 passengers. The seating area is divided into two sections, one with cafeteria style seating with fixed tables and swivel seats, and the second area being diner style with comfortable benches and tables.

Forward Observation Lounge: This is a large area with great viewing and a variety of seating. The area includes individual seating as well as ample bench and table seating for groups and families. The middle portion of the lounge is raised providing improved viewing for this area. Several small monitors are located here and show interpretation videos and other ship information. The lounge also has several large well lit display cases with Alaskan art and Native art of very high quality. There is no or limited information on these pieces. The Forest Service has a very small interpretative area that is undersized for the ship.

Theater: This is the only ship with an enclosed theatre with large screen projection system, good sound system and theater style seating as opposed to a TV lounge. The theatre seats approximately 100 people.

Solarium: The solarium is mid sized and located on the sides of the ship as opposed to the rear as one large space. The configuration reduces its capacity and ease of use. Heating is provided, as well as lockers, deck chairs and lounge chairs. The solarium is undersized for the peak season. Camping is allowed on the lower deck and is also limited.

Lounge (bar):

Puuser Area: This is a large and well organized area providing a good range of services including satellite phone, mail service, pamphlet racks, Alaskan art work, and a separate interpretive area. This area is not manned but has numerous maps, charts, pamphlets and books available in an area with seating and tables. The area also has a large TV that is hooked up to the ship's GPS and also shows telex news, weather, sports and events on the ship.

Gift Shop: This is a well stocked gift shop with many items including books, games, souvenirs and toiletries.

Interpretation: Numerous high quality art, displays and pictures are found throughout the ship but with little information on them. The interpretive area and monitors on the ship provide great opportunities to further expand services to passengers.

The M/V Kennicott



M/V LeConte

The LeConte is the smallest of the mainline fleet and serves many of the smaller communities within the Inside Passage on the Community Link Routes. As a result it only has basic services and does not have an interpreter on board or staterooms. It is very similar to the Aurora.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 300

Vehicles: 34

Other facilities include:

The M/V LeConte with the Herbert Glacier in the background.



Cafeteria Located at the rear of the ship this basic cafeteria can accommodate approximately 80 people with a combination of bench seating and fixed tables and chairs. Due to the small size of the ship the cafeteria also contains video games and vending machines and is a popular area to sit as it is the only area on board with tables. As a result it can be crowded and noisy.

Forward Lounge A small forward viewing area with good views. Recliner seating for approximately 100 people. There is no USDA Forest Service interpretative deck on this ship. Lockers are found in this area.

TV Lounge A small recliner lounge for approximately 75 passengers with one large TV for showing movies while underway. This is a popular sleeping area at night.

Solarium: This ship has two heated solariums on either side of the rear of the ship with direct access to the ship decks. A large deck to the aft connects the two solariums and provide good open air viewing and tenting.

Purser Area A very small purser deck is located in the main lobby of the ship deck with limited interpretation. The area has pamphlet racks, marine mammal identification charts, a satellite phone and calling card machine. A large mural occupies the largest wall space on the ship and could be better utilized.

Interpretation: Interpretation is limited on this boat. The LeConte is typically used by residents moving from one small community to another and has few visitors traveling on it. However, visitors who wish to see the communities served by this ship should be provided with more information. Since this ship sails the same route, interpretation could be developed specifically for its route. The ship has several prints and historic artifacts related to the LeConte on board but with little interpretation.



M/V Lituya

This smaller ship was commissioned in 2004 and makes the daily 17 mile trip between Ketchikan and Metlakatla. Due to the short sailing duration, limited services are provided on this ship.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 149

Vehicles: 18

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria A small service area includes complimentary coffee, tea and cookies. No other food services are available.

Upper Lounge: Located on the upper deck, this area has recliner style seating for approximately 100 people. The entire deck is comprised of windows and allows 270 degree viewing from this lounge area.

TV Lounge: Located on the lower deck, this area has no windows but provides recliner style seating for three televisions that show interpretive and other programs during the voyage.

Interpretation: This ship has very little interpretation on board and includes maps and limited information taped to the ship bulkhead. There are many opportunities to expand interpretive services on this ship. This is especially true as this ship only sails one route and can be easy configured to the single route it sails.

Two of the most common ways to travel along the Inside Passage, by air and sea. The M/V Lituya with a floatplane overhead.

M/V Malaspina

The Malispina (called the 'Mal' by locals) was christened in 1963 and makes it one of the oldest ships in the fleet. It has under gone several upgrades over the years and is a full service ship.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 701

Vehicles: 88

Four berth cabins: 46

Two berth cabins: 27

Other facilities include:

Cafeteria 175 with good window views and better than cafeteria style food

Forward Observation Lounge: Large area that has individual recliner style seating with great viewing opportunities. The USDA Forest Service interpretation area is found here and is one of largest in fleet but still too small. The lounge also includes an electronic touch screen kiosk with information about Southeast Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

Aft (Aft) Lounge: Contains a children's play area, video games and a variety of seating makes it a popular area for families with children. The play equipment is sparse and outdated but still popular.

Lif's Room: A quiet area that is closed off from the rest of the ship with table and chair seating. Recently had outlets installed at each table making it popular with people working on computers or quiet small groups. Crew can often be found in the area during breaks and offers good opportunity for interaction.

TV Lounge: Seats approximately 50 in recliner style chairs with one large TV. Bench seating along the sides of room are separated by partition wall and is a popular area for sleeping.

Solarium: Large covered area and heated with ample deck chairs and lounge chairs and lockers at the rear of the ship. Access is by exterior decks. Exterior decks include two large areas for tenting and seating in good weather.

Lounge (Bar): Mid sized non-descript area for adults only. Has a piano and board games. Seats 70 at table and chairs and at bar.

Purser Area: Pleasant area with some of the best interpretation in the fleet. Has a display case with a nice variety of Native art and description of art written on paper and taped on glass display case. Good lighting. Could be a prototype for other ships. Another display includes taxidermy of bald eagles with interpretive signing and is also effective. Purser area also includes satellite phone, machine card vending, pamphlet area, ice machine.

Gift shop: Small with outdated items but sells books, games, souvenirs and toiletries.

Interpretation: Despite the good displays in the purser area this ship has the fewest number of maps and other display throughout the rest of the ship. Ship has four very large original oil paintings of Alaska wildlife with no interpretation.



The M/V Malaspina

M/V Matanuska

The Matanuska one of the original mainline ships and was also launched in 1963 with the Malaspina. It is one of the best laid out ships, user friendly and easy to move around in. It too has undergone several upgrades while in service.

The boat has the following capacity:

Passengers: 745

Vehicles: 88

Four berth cabins: 6

Three berth cabins: 21

Two berth cabins: 82

Other facilities include:



The M/V Matanuska

Cafeteria 150 with good window views and the kitchen was recently upgraded providing very good food.

Forward Observation Lounge: Mid sized and popular due to variety of seating including curved couch style seating and swivel chairs. Can be too crowded during peak seasons. USFS Interpretation area is very small and has no materials posted in the off season. Lounge also has a small undersized children play area.

TV Lounge: A large area with recliner seating for 100 and two large TVs.

Solarium: Large covered area and heated with ample deck chairs and lounge chairs and lockers. Access is by exterior decks. Exterior decks include one large areas for tenting and seating in good weather.

Lounge (bar): Comfortable adult area for approximately 75 people. Has music, video games, piano, bar snacks and good window views.

Purser Area: Good sized purser desk with satellite phone, phone card vending machine, mailbox, ice machine, pamphlet racks and many maps and marine charts.

Gift Shop: Small with outdated items but sells books, games, souvenirs and toiletries.

Interpretation: Ship has a large display case with high quality original Native art and landscape paintings but without interpretation. This ship also has interesting very large black and white historic images of old communities that are no longer inhabited but has no interpretation. Ship has numerous maps, charts, art work all needing descriptions or organization.

CHALLENGES: INTERPRETATION

Since a major goal of this byway is to make travelers more aware of the special qualities that this segment of the byway offers, interpretation plays an important role and is needed. The Marine Highway has partnered with the USDA Forest Service for over 20 years providing outstanding interpretive programs on many of the ships in the summer. On-board interpretive specialists sail with the ships and provide numerous interpretive programs throughout the sailing in the forward lounge of the ships. This is a great program not found on any other byway and has the potential to be a world class interpretive program. If the program could be expanded to more months of the year and be provided on more ships, the benefits could be substantial. This program is limited only by the very small interpretive spaces, storage and existing audio and video systems which could be improved upon on most all ships. Better planned interpretive spaces could go a long way to improve on board interpretive services and make them equal to the landscape/seascape that the passengers came to see. There is some desire to expand this program to include other federal partners, Native Corporations and the communities to make this program even more successful.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game also plays an important interpretive role with the Marine Highway. Alaska Fish and Game manages the *Watchable Wildlife Program* throughout the state and the goal of this program is to create opportunities for viewing wildlife. Although wildlife can be found throughout the state, this program identifies accessible sites with outstanding wildlife viewing opportunities and establishes the facilities such as viewing blinds, shelters and interpretive stations to safely watch Alaska's wildlife. In many cases local interpreters are on site during the peak season. *Watchable Wildlife* sites can be found in many of the

port communities and also includes the Alaska's Marine Highway ships and the routes sailed by them due to the abundant wildlife viewed from the ships and availability of on-board interpreters. The success of this program is from the partnership with other government agencies such as the USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Marine Highway. This program is in the process of updating its older interpretive material on the Marine Highway ships and is looking for new opportunities to expand interpretation aboard them and in the communities served by the Marine Highway.

The vast majority of the lands viewed from the Marine Highway routes are public lands managed by the USDA Forest Service, and other federal and state agencies. Many of the port communities are surrounded by these lands and contain recreation opportunities, visitor centers and interpretive facilities that are attractive to Marine Highway passengers visiting these communities. Partnerships should continue with these agencies who manage these lands and the facilities on them. Having numerous government agencies providing interpretive opportunities can be very beneficial but can also result in confusion to what is available and how to access it.

The terminals serve as gateways to the communities and are the first opportunity to interact with locals and learn more about the community. Each terminal is managed independently and has varying levels of interpretation provided in them. Some are old and outdated while others are very effective due to partnerships with local, state or federal government agencies. There needs to be clear, consistent and well planned interpretive information at each terminal. These must be terminal specific but have a consistent look through the system and ensure that all byway stories are being told and local information provided.

A Forest Service on-board interpreter leads a workshop on whales of the Inside Passage.



In many of the port communities additional interpreters are available from the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service.



Similarly, the ships also contain a variety of interpretive information on them and vary greatly from ship to ship. Many of these are out of date and require updating and organizing. Much of the information provided on the ships are not displayed in an organized fashion and result in a 'treasure hunt' atmosphere to find information. Much of this information is not specific for use on the ships but are generic information from a variety of sources. There needs to be clear, consistent and well planned interpretive information on each ship.

For this segment of the byway, additional interpretation is needed for many of the communities. This segment of the Marine Highway has world class scenery and wildlife viewing as well as rich cultural, historic and natural qualities. Given the size of the byway, numerous land managing agencies, the numerous opportunities along this segment, more information is needed to clarify for the traveler what is available and how to access these opportunities. Travelers should have easy access to information; this will make their trip planning more efficient and encourage lengthier stays. Generally speaking, there is a great need for an interpretive plan that looks at the entire region, its communities and the ship servicing the area and pulls all of this together into an effective, integrated strategy.

Other interpretive challenges and opportunities include the need for a consistent look to all materials along the byway, the need for information and materials to be consolidated into efficient packages, and the need to work cooperatively with all existing museums and other attractions so that resulting interpretation builds upon, rather than repeats, existing exhibits and information.

SUMMARY

These challenges and opportunities form the basis for Chapter 4, *Actions*. The central theme emerging from Chapter 3 is the need for coordination and cooperation to make traveling on Alaska's Marine Highway a more seamless and easy experience. Facility and interpretive investments will enhance many aspects of the travel experience. In addition, marketing is needed to get the message to travelers that the system offers a unique way to see a unique part of America. The central themes emerging from this section are the following:

- Segment participation in the full byway effort must be efficient and not overburden existing staffing resources.
- Customer service could be improved to make the traveling experience more enjoyable and make passengers more informed and comfortable with the idea of disembarking from the ships and exploring the communities. Make it easier to get from the terminals to the communities and where possible allow passengers to spend an appropriate time in communities.
- Marketing efforts must strike a balance between the full byway marketing programs which are funded and controlled by the Alaska Marine Highway staff and the cooperative efforts between the Marine Highway staff and local tourism organizations. Together, these professionals must seek cooperative programs that promote both the full byway and the distinct experiences of each segment.
- Existing interpretation is good but it could be improved to equal the opportunities present along this segment. Partnership with the Forest Service has been an invaluable opportunity and provides outstanding on-board interpretation that could be made world class. Enhancements are required on both the ships and terminals. Additional interpretation is required for the communities, cultures and the landscapes the ships are sailing through.

Four Native cultures can be found along the Inside Passage and include the Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian. Numerous cultural events are held in many of the communities throughout the year.



