



City of Gustavus, Alaska

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November 7, 2019

Governor Michael Dunleavy
3rd Floor, State Capitol
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy:

Save our road, save our cities. It's that simple. Alaska Statute (19.65.050) states the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) is an essential part of the state transportation system, and that it warrants continued and predictable state support with a steady, stable, and dependable marine highway system service level. We urge your commitment to providing the vital ferry service in accordance with AS 19.65.050. Legislative findings, purpose, and intent for the AMHS.

The recent news of the November 1st press release from Commissioner MacKinnon that the LeConte will be in the yards until a decision is made which vessel, the LeConte or the Aurora, is the most economically viable that will determine which vessel will continue to serve the fleet. If either vessel is removed from service without an immediate replacement, the impact could be catastrophic. The proposed schedule leaves Gustavus, and other communities serviced by the LeConte without service for seven or eight months. As Hoonah is receiving ferry service December 1st by the Malaspina and December 25th by the Matanuska to Sitka and return to Juneau it is requested that Gustavus be added to the route. In addition, please consider using either, or both, the Malaspina and Matanuska to replace service usually provided by the LeConte.

Imagine, no ability during winter to restock provisions, make appointments for medical needs, acquire materials and equipment for emergent repairs to your home. Sure, you may be able to take a small plane if the weather allows – which is incredibly unreliable during the winter. What if you are not physically able to board a small plane because of disabilities? You just can't rely on air travel in Southeast during winter.

The no-ferry period is so long that it spans winter into summer. This is the time you prepare for your economic period, whether for business or otherwise. Ferries here move more than just cars. *They move our economy!* The ferry LeConte carries Gustavus residents to Juneau for shopping and home with purchases efficiently and economically. As with many Alaskan communities, *ours is a visitor economy.* The ferry enables a second travel channel for visitors from the Lower 48 to and throughout Southeast Alaska. They arrive in Gustavus with motor vehicles, bicycles, boats on trailers, kayaks, fishing and hunting equipment. They hire our guides, our tour boats, stay at our lodges, explore Glacier Bay and Icy Strait, and visit our



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July 25, 2019

Alaska Marine Highway System
Attn: Captain John F. Falvey Jr
7559 North Tongass Highway
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901-9101

Dear Captain Falvey:

The proposed schedule patterns for the fall/winter/spring – October through April of the 2019-2020 ferry season is devastating to the community of Gustavus. In your letter you state that the operating plan has been designed to meet community service needs – well it doesn't!

Taking the *LeConte* out of service without a replacement from January 15 to March 1 may seem like a reasonable layup strategy, but you fail to understand that this month and a half void is followed by another month and a half to two months Gustavus will be without ferry service while the AMHS dock goes under repair. That's three plus months without ferry service just before the beginning of tourism season!

The ferry is critical to our economy. Leaving us without a way to bring in supplies and materials to prepare for the most economically important time of the year is irresponsible. The timing of the dock repair already puts at risk the ability for the city to bring visitors in and conduct commerce in the region. Consider combining some of the layup time with the yard time and providing Gustavus with summer-season preparation time.

PLEASE adjust the layup time for the *LeConte* to provide at least a couple weeks of service before the work on the AMHS dock commences.

Sincerely,

Calvin Casipit, Mayor



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CONTINUE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SERVICE

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Community economies of Southeast Alaska rely heavily on independent travelers for whom the AMHS is the main transportation system. The system provides critical transportation to remote areas where primary and second-home populations reside and work, the backbone of a vital commuting workforce, and year-round life-saving transportation services for those in need of medical services irrespective of often-inclement Southeast weather. With few exceptions, the AMHS provides local businesses with equipment, merchandise, and customers. And let us not forget that all of the above impacts will cause failures in local government that will rely more heavily on the State's assistance to replace the loss of locally-produced funding. Without the service of the AMHS, the majority of Alaska's maritime towns will be hit a devastating blow in a time when growth and success are beginning to gain momentum.

The economic damage caused by eliminating ferry service to Southeast Alaska communities would be profound for the citizens who rely on the AMHS to provide adequate service to meet the health and lifestyle needs of Southeast Alaska customers, businesses, and residents and to meet the expanding needs of the commercial sector, providing increased capacity for goods and services to and from neighboring locations, as well as the lower forty-eight.


Do not end the AMHS vital service conversation simply on current operations. Continued service of the AMHS includes ensuring future service. Significant fiscal forecasting is required to comply with State Statute. More importantly, it is a fundamental responsibility of our State leaders to recognize the need for equal treatment of ALL Alaskans. If a bridge collapses or a highway needs repair, would cutting-off the communities serviced by those transportation assets be considered? The Gustavus City Council stresses to the Legislature and the Governor the need to comply with State Statute and provide for the AMHS continuing essential services to the maritime communities of Alaska. Save our road, save our cities. It's that simple.

Calvin Casipit, Mayor

galleries and shops. Each trip generates business at both ends—business that supports employment and contributes vital local sales and bed tax revenue. *A trip not taken generates no business.*

The economic damage caused by eliminating ferry service to Southeast Alaska communities for eight months would be profound for the citizens who rely on the AMHS to provide adequate service to meet the health and lifestyle needs of Southeast Alaska customers, businesses, and residents. Please don't forget those of us in the rural coastal Southeast. Please hear our voice as we emphasize the importance of this transportation backbone of rural coastal Alaska.

Sincerely,



**Calvin Casipit
Mayor, City of Gustavus**

**Cc: U.S. Senator Murkowski
U.S. Senator Sullivan
U.S. Representative Young
Alaska State Senator Keihl
Alaska State Representative Hannan
Alaska Municipal League
Southeast Conference
Glacier Bay National Park**

Gustavus Comings and Goings

In last few years there have been between 7,500 - 8,500 people coming to or going from Gustavus by ferry each year, and between 19,000 - 21,700 passengers coming or going by airplane each year (2016 air travel data is preliminary, numbers will rise as full reporting occurs). You can see a close correlation between the number of ferries to/from town and the number of passengers. For both ferry travelers and air travelers the numbers coming to and going from Gustavus each year are about equal.

The Alaska Marine Highway System just started tracking vehicle types in 2016. Their records show 27 RVs travelled both to and from Gustavus between May and December 2016 aboard ferries. And, records say only 10 RVs for all of 2017 travelled both to and from town via ferry.

For freight and mail, in 2015 (most recent complete reporting year) there were 88,774 pounds of freight arriving in Gustavus by air and 29,954 pounds of freight leaving. For mail, 75,913 pounds arrived that year and 24,550 pounds departed by plane. In 2015, Air Ex was the largest freight transporter (54%) followed by Wings of Alaska (32%). Also in 2015, 47% of passengers travelled on Wings, and 32% on Alaska Airlines.

