



**HAINES BOROUGH, ALASKA**  
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February 14, 2020

Commissioner John S. MacKinnon  
Alaska Dept. of Transportation and Public Facilities  
PO Box 112500  
Juneau, AK 99811-2500  
[john.mackinnon@alaska.gov](mailto:john.mackinnon@alaska.gov)

Re: Pride in Service

Dear Commissioner MacKinnon:

The Alaska Marine Highway System is especially dear to Haines because it all started here, with three Haines men who had a dream to provide dependable marine transportation between Alaska's coastal communities. Steve Homer, Ray and Gustav Gelotte purchased an ex-US Navy landing craft, named it the MV Chilkoot and began service between Tee Harbor, Haines and Skagway. That was 1949.

In seventy-one subsequent years, the territory purchased the Chilkoot Motorship Lines in 1951, became a state and in 1963 founded the Alaska Marine Highway System. The first port of calls were in Southeast. In 1964 the system expanded to Southwest and South Central Alaska. Expansion continued through the 1960s and 1970s. Additional ports were added, capacity increased and by the 1990s the Alaska Marine Highway System gained national acclaim. We were proud! In 2002 the system was named a National Scenic Byway for its scenic, cultural and archaeological qualities. It is the only marine route designated an All-American Road.

What happened? Today the system is in shambles. It cannot gain consensus on who it is supposed to serve, or why. Politicians argue. Design engineers argue. Unions argue. Apparently, the only people who love the system are the riders, the people who depend on it. The people who were charged with caring for it,

and maintaining it worked it to their own advantage or ignored its needs.

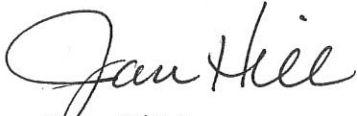
Shame on us!

We appeal to you to buck up. Only leadership can pull this system back into health. We need leadership to return us to our place in history, as a state that responds to its unique needs through innovative and sustainable programs. Solution to the issues plaguing the Alaska Marine Highway are not partisan; the solution lies in strong leadership that comes from a sense of pride in history and accomplishments. As an Alaska, you feel this.

We do not want a legacy of decadence and negligence.

Make us proud again. Know that the Alaska Marine Highway is a remarkable response to a state's unique geography. We are an archipelago, so respond accordingly. Show leadership and return our highway to its glory as an All-American Road.

Sincerely,



Jan Hill  
Mayor



Debra J. Schnabel  
Manager

Copy: Deputy Commission Mary Siroky  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Nils Andreassen, Alaska Municipal League  
Robert Venables, Southeast Conference