



August 13, 2020

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
John MacKinnon, Commissioner
PO Box 112500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-2500

via email to: dot.amhs.comments@alaska.gov and john.mackinnon@alaska.gov

Commissioner MacKinnon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the AMHS proposed 2020 Winter Ferry Operating Plan.

I must admit I was shocked to see that ADOT&PF was providing less than 5 days to make public comment on the plan, which is insufficient time for groups such as our Borough Assembly to meet and approve comments to submit on behalf of our community. Therefore, these comments are my personal opinions. This short comment period is simply not acceptable. In addition, in the request for comments ADOT&PF is only providing an "operating plan" but no schedule. A schedule would greatly help our residents fully understand the severity of cuts in service to Petersburg. The short comment period and lack of a schedule to review certainly highlights the realization that ADOT&PF is working toward elimination of our ferry system.

The proposed operating plan for the Alaska Marine Highway System in Southeast Alaska, and specifically Petersburg, is not acceptable. Petersburg, and our local businesses, require regular and consistent service to support our vibrant commercial fishing-based economy. Failure to provide consistent stops and schedules contribute to lower ferry usage and make it necessary to divert or cancel ongoing use of the system. Diversion or cancelation of ferry use by our community will hurt AMHS financially and will make it seem as if Petersburg does not rely on the system, which is not the case. Again, highlighting that ADOT&PF is working toward elimination of our ferry system.

My issues with the proposed operating plan include:

- 1) the potential for cancelling stops in Wrangell and Petersburg due to the tides;
- 2) the pre-planned gap in service from January 6 – February 10; and,
- 3) the lack of regular service both north and southbound throughout the year.

Regular service should be twice weekly stops in both directions (north and south) with consistent schedules working around the tides when necessary as has been done with past schedules. It is ridiculous to propose Wrangell and Petersburg "will be covered intermittently as tides permit". Tidal movement is readily available and a schedule that takes tides into account should be drafted as in previous years.

It is important to remind ADOT that the Marine Highway System is the only external "road system" for our Southeast communities. Reductions in service hurt our local economy and reduce the quality of living for our citizens. I feel it is time for ADOT&PF to take the steps necessary to help Southeast Alaska rather than pursuing actions which will delay our recovery from the ongoing pandemic and State economic woes.

Respectfully,



Mark Jensen
Petersburg Borough Mayor

cc: Governor Dunleavy
Senator Stedman
Representative Kreiss-Tomkins
John Falvey, AMHS General Manager
Nils Andreassen, Alaska Municipal League

Borough Administration

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