

Chair Bishop, Chair Steadman, and Senate Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of the City of Seldovia, I am requesting that: (1) funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System be held to at minimum the levels approved last year by the Legislature and (2) full funding of the Community Assistance Program.

AMHS: In a letter dated February 25, 2021 to the City of Seldovia, Commissioner MacKinnon stated “As the public and the Alaska Legislature deliberate on Governor Dunleavy’s proposed AMHS operating budget for fiscal year 2022, I would encourage all AMHS stakeholders to engage in this legislative process.” Seldovia is very willing to come to the table and discuss how to make AMHS operate sustainably and I believe, given past actions, the Legislature is very supportive in having this discussion and making that happen. In 2019, you added \$5 million to vessel operations which was subsequently vetoed by the Governor. In 2020, the Legislature added an additional \$23.5 million, which would have significantly reduced gaps in service, and the Governor vetoed \$15.5 million of that addition – all from vessel operations.

As stated in DOT&PF notices, “The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities oversees 237 airports, 10 ferries serving 35 communities, over 5,600 miles of highway and 776 public facilities throughout the state of Alaska. The mission of the department is to ‘Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.’” We understand DOT&PF serves all communities through various infrastructure/transportation needs and that it’s a balancing act. The ferry however is what keeps Seldovia, and neighboring communities like Homer, moving. Please see attached for a letter from the City of Homer, advocating on behalf of Homer and communities like Seldovia, for the state to recognize the critical value of the AMHS to thriving coastal communities, implement recommendations of the Reshaping Work Group Report, and work with coastal communities to come up with a solution that provides a reliable, dependable, and sustainably ferry system.

Where we put the funding/budget demonstrates what we consider important, and at times, essential. Thank you for working with Commissioner MacKinnon and Governor Dunleavy to find a sustainable solution to Seldovia’s transportation lifeline.

CAP: Recapitalizing the Community Assistance Fund to its full amount of \$90M will provide funding stability for local governments like Seldovia during these uncertain times.

Rachel Friedlander
City Manager
City of Seldovia