

# **Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan 2014 Draft**

## **Kake, Alaska / Meeting Summaries**

### **Introduction**

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) issued a draft Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP) for public review in June 2014. On August 25, 2014, DOT&PF held an evening open house and public meeting in Kake, Alaska at City Hall, and during the day met with the City manager for the City of Kake, as well as the IRA Tribal Council of the Organized Village of Kake.

A combined total of 15 people attended these meetings (see attached attendance list).

### **DOT&PF Presentation at Open House/Public Meeting**

The public meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed:

- The DOT&PF statutory obligation to develop and maintain the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan, as a component of the Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan. The SATP directs investment in the regional transportation system over a 20-year period, identifying current priorities and guiding development of projects.
- The SATP was first published in 1980 and was updated and revised in 1986, 1999, and 2004 as an approved component of the Statewide Transportation Plan. To prepare the current update, DOT&PF conducted a scoping process in 2011, which led to development of the Draft SATP document in 2014.
- The comment period for this Draft SATP document is open until September 30, 2014. Written comments can be submitted to DOT&PF via email, mail or fax.
- There are also current National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) processes for several projects that have separate comment periods and official administrative records. These include the proposed East Lynn Canal Highway, Angoon airport, and the proposed road connection from Kake to Petersburg. Comments intended for consideration by an EIS must be submitted to the project manager of each EIS during its open comment periods.
- Trends for the Existing Transportation System – The Draft SATP analyzed and responds to trends that show a *decrease* in Southeast Alaska population, traffic on the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) and funding for transportation projects, coupled with *increases* in operations, maintenance and construction costs.

- Since 2006, AMHS Southeast Alaska annual maintenance and operation costs have increased from about \$110M to nearly \$140M, while ferry sailings have dropped from about 6,500/year to 6,000 year in that period.
  - From 1991-2012, passenger ridership has declined from approximately 370,000 to 310,000/year, with vehicle traffic holding fairly steady at approximately 100,000 vehicles/year. Over that time, the ferry fleet has increased from six to ten ferries.
- The SATP considers many factors: three aging mainline ferries, comments received on the Scoping Report, interest in continuing existing ferry routes, cost to maintain the existing transportation system, regional transportation needs, current priorities and projects, and funding forecasts.
- Alternatives – The SATP considered four options, described in more detail and compared in Appendix C of the draft plan: (1) Baseline system (maintain existing), SATP Preferred Alternative, (3) Maximize Use of Existing Roads and (4) Highway Route 7
- Recommendations – The Draft SATP recommends maintaining all existing highway and ferry routes and provides improvements that will further increase the mobility of people and goods, such as new road links. It also includes measures to help reduce some system costs, such as retirement or replacement of aging mainliners and use of day boats. It recommends the following specific changes to the transportation system, that would (1) better match capacity to demand, (2) keep ferry service to Bellingham, (3) keep cross Gulf ferry service, and (4) emphasize labor and fuel efficiency:
  - 2016 & 2017 (now 2018) – Two new Alaska Class Dayboats to service Lynn Canal
  - 2018 – Angoon Airport completed
  - 2020 – Lynn Canal Highway to Katzeihin and ferry terminal completed
  - 2020 – Haines-Skagway shuttle ferry service initiated
  - 2020 – Kake-Petersburg Road (gravel single land) and Wrangell Narrows shuttle ferry terminals completed
  - 2025 – New mainline ferry on-line; potential for a second mainline ferry to follow
  - 2028 – Fast ferry replacement
  - 2033 – Sitka-Warm Springs Bay road initiated (planning, environmental, design). Construction is not anticipated during the 20-year planning period.
- Capital costs over the next 20 years to maintain and implement the preferred alternative total \$1.3B for system refurbishments and \$1.2B for major projects (construction, procurement), respectively. The Plan reduces the annual operation and maintenance expense of the overall regional transportation system three percent.(Noted that the preferred alternative is not the least expensive alternative to operate and maintain, as maximizing the use of existing roads or constructing Highway Route 7 would reduce annual system costs by 15% to 16%, respectively.)

- The Draft SATP document also includes information about continuing efforts to maintain and improve the transportation system in Southeast Alaska, provides an overview of the existing system, identifies essential transportation and utility corridors in the region (App. A), describes the scoping process and public comments (App. B), compares the four planning alternatives (App. C) and provides public and government involvement plans (App. D).
- Regarding the proposed road connection between Petersburg and Kake, the following information was shared about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

Early 2015:

- Prepare a socioeconomic assessment and needs assessment for this proposed road,
- Develop a detailed Purpose and Need statement,
- Interview Kake, Petersburg and Kupreanof residents regarding their travel patterns and needs,
- Interview businesses regarding their transportation patterns and needs,
- Conduct a statistically valid survey of residents in Kake, Petersburg and Kupreanof regarding their opinion regarding the proposed road.
- Findings of these assessments and surveys will be presented by ADOT&PF at public meetings, and in meetings with municipalities, Tribes, Native corporations, and other stakeholders.

2015 – Conduct environmental baseline surveys and analysis

2016 – Draft EIS issued

2017 – Final EIS and Record of Decision issued

- The Draft Plan recommendations would have the following impacts on Kake: (1) Construction of a one-lane gravel road connecting Kake and Petersburg with a shuttle ferry across the Wrangell Narrows, and (2) continued mainline ferry service

## Questions & Answers, Comments

### Key

- Comment or Question
  - DOT&PF Response

### Kake-Petersburg Road Maintenance

- Who will maintain the proposed road from Kake to Petersburg?
  - DOT&PF has offered to maintain the road from Kake to Seal Point upon receipt of an easement from the Forest Service and transfer of rights of way from the City of Kake and the U.S. Forest Service. When the remaining portion of the road is constructed (Seal Point to Petersburg) the State will maintain the new road and operate the new ferry connection to Petersburg.

- The City of Kake does not receive adequate funding from DOT&PF now to maintain its existing roads. If the maintenance budget remains the same, the city would not have sufficient funds to maintain additional road. Would DOT&PF plow the road in winter?
  - The road would be plowed to the city landfill.
- What about snowmobile accidents past the plowed portion?
  - Public safety has snowmobiles to access unplowed road sections.
- The state has been transferring ownership of harbors back to cities. Is this same trend happening with roads?
  - The state would prefer that cities acquire ownership and conduct road maintenance. The state generally assumes responsibility for roadways from the city center to the airport. DOT&PF does plan to transfer ownership of local residential roads, which were acquired by the state at statehood, back to local communities.

#### Kake-Petersburg Road-Route

- How frequent are the turnouts along the road?
  - Turnouts would be provided at regular intervals and at limited sight distance turns.

#### Kake-Petersburg Road-Mixed Support and Opposition

- Is this road what the state wanted for Kake or is it what Kake wanted for Kake?
- Several council members want to put something on the ballot in October regarding the road. People feel they have enough information now to make a good decision. “The majority of the city council and the community are against the road.”
- If the community passes a resolution against this road, what will happen? Does every community have to say no to the road for the project to be cancelled?
- The community would prefer better ferry service to Juneau rather than a road to Petersburg. The community has already made up its mind. If the state wants better access to Kake, why not work on improving the ferry system?
- No one is going to go to Petersburg to shop, because the prices are the same as Kake.
- People must be convinced that this road is a good idea. It would more than double Kake’s ferry service, because we would have access to Petersburg’s ferry service, as well as Petersburg’s barge service, and travel on Alaska Airlines.
- There are less than two miles of road remaining to finish the Kake to Petersburg road. It seems unlikely that there would be any major environmental impacts uncovered in the EIS. The benefits far outweigh the negatives.
- What can we do to support the SATP?

#### Power Intertie

- We have heard that the intertie will not supply enough power to meet Kake’s demand.
- Will the intertie and the road to Petersburg follow the same alignment? Can the intertie be maintained without a road?
  - The notice to initiate an EIS for the intertie has been posted online; this project is undergoing a separate EIS from the access road between Kake and Petersburg. The alignment for the intertie has not been selected yet. It might not be the same as the road.

A road is not required for intertie maintenance. However, it would be advantageous for the intertie be built along the same route.

### Kake Airport

- What are the chances of getting water and sewer service to the airport in Kake?
- Kake would like its runway to be 1,000 feet longer.
- Flying is preferred when people are in a hurry to get somewhere.

### Kake Ferry Service and Ferry Terminal

- How will DOT&PF provide better access to Kake?
- Why not have a fast ferry from Haines to Kake?
  - The fast ferry doesn't have enough speed to add Kake to the route. The Coast Guard limit for a single crew shift is 12 hours and the fast ferry could not do this route in 12 hours or less. However, once the road from Sitka to Warm Springs is constructed, saving the ferry 12 hours of time in Chatham Strait, it is possible that the ferry from Sitka to Juneau could stop in Angoon and Kake on alternating trips.
- If Kake were to get fast ferry service, would the terminal be redesigned?
  - Some modifications may be required to accommodate a fast ferry.
- Right now, it is too expensive to travel by ferry to Juneau, because the turnaround is so quick that one cannot get shopping and appointments done in time, forcing a wait of as long as 7 days in the winter to take the next ferry back to Kake. With the price of multiple nights in a hotel, restaurant meals, and the ferry tickets, it is not worth the trip to go to Juneau for shopping. If the ferry had an 8 hour daytime layover in Juneau, it would allow people to get off, accomplish their appointments/shopping, then get on and return to Kake - thus making the ferry much more useable.
- Why not make the Kake ferry terminal compatible with the fast ferry? Why not make all Southeast Alaska terminals compatible with both types of ferries?
  - Terminal modifications are made in support of service decisions, not speculation.
- Has DOT&PF compared current ridership from Kake with what it could be if we had better service? Ridership would also increase if AMHS did a special event ferry for Gold Medal.
- Under this plan, how often would there be service from Kake to Yakutat?
  - This trip would be offered as frequently as there is mainline service to the two communities.
- Kake is centrally located. There has been past discussion about making Kake the central hub for the mainline ferry.
- Is the decrease in ferry ridership in related to a change in (decreased) service?
- How does the ferry system market itself in the Lower 48? All the ferry gift shops are closed, and the ferry feels like just another way to travel. But there is great potential to market the ferry as the "poor man's cruise." It is the best way to see the true Alaska.
- We want to support the ferry system, but it needs to be more useable.
- With so many plans for ferry terminals far from city centers, there are concerns about people transporting themselves to and from the ferry. What about travelers who don't have a car?

- When can Kake get a ferry terminal to stay warm and dry? There is a strong community need for this; children, elders, and people traveling to Juneau for medical care are not adequately protected from the elements now as the shelter is open on two sides.

#### Current Road Maintenance

- The last time the State road maintenance crew painted the lines on the road in Kake, they left several 50-gallon drums of paint behind. The community had to pay to back-haul it with other hazardous materials. They also did not sweep the road before they painted, and many of the lines were painted directly onto dirt and gravel rather than pavement. The paint went right off the road.

#### SATP Timing and Changes

- Could the SATP change if we have a new governor?
  - Yes, the plan has to survive multiple administrations. Some elements of the plan, such as the Warm Spring ferry terminal, are beyond the 20 year planning horizon.

#### Juneau Access Road

- Will the Juneau Access Road save the state money in the long run?
  - Yes, in the long term.
- Is the road in an avalanche zone?
  - Yes, it passes several avalanche chutes, although not all reach the roadway. This is one of the reasons why maintenance of the road would be similar in cost to operation of the ferry. The other reason is three ferries would still operate between Haines, Skagway and a new ferry terminal at Katzechin River.
- Is there any connection between the location of the Kensington Mine and the development of the Juneau Access Road?
  - No, the Juneau Access Road has been on project lists long before the mine was there.

**Draft Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan  
Attendance at Kake, Alaska meetings  
August 25, 2014**

**City of Kake Meeting**

1. Rudy Bean, City Manager, City of Kake

**Organized Village of Kake IRA Tribal Council**

1. Gary Williams, Executive Director, Organized Village of Kake
2. Georgina Davis-Gastelum
3. Lincoln Bean Sr.
4. Michael Jackson
5. Nick Davis
6. Roy Aceveda
7. Wallace James

**Open House and Public Meeting**

1. Gary Williams – Executive Director, Organized Village of Kake
2. Rudy Bean – City Manager, City of Kake
3. Adam Davis
4. Angela Shipley
5. Edna Jackson
6. Kevin Shipley
7. Teresa Gaudette

**DOT&PF Team**

Andy Hughes, DOT&PF  
Sarah Bronstein, Sheinberg Associates