



Denali Commission
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March 6, 2025

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Alaska State Senator District S

****Delivered via email to Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov****

RE: Backhaul Alaska Program – Request for State of Alaska Support

Dear Senator Hoffman,

I am writing to request the State of Alaska's financial support for the Backhaul Alaska program. As you may know, Backhaul Alaska helps rural communities remove waste that can harm people and the environment. This typically includes lead acid batteries, mercury containing lamps (lightbulbs), and electronic waste as these are the primary source of toxic metals in Alaska's rural landfills. Toxic metals can cause neurological damage and other serious conditions in humans and subsistence resources like fish.

US Senator Lisa Murkowski suggested the initial concept of Backhaul Alaska in 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, the Solid Waste Alaska Taskforce worked with diverse stakeholders to develop a statewide strategy. In 2018, Backhaul Alaska began its pilot phase. By 2022, Backhaul Alaska began its buildout phase; the program expects to be built out by 2030. Up to now, the program has served about 110 communities and backhauled about 907 tons of waste. This waste has been delivered to recyclers in Anchorage and the Lower 48. In 2023, the program served more than 50 communities at a cost of about \$1.12 million. By 2030, the program intends to serve about 220 communities; the anticipated cost of operating Backhaul Alaska on an ongoing basis is about \$3.15 million per year.

Backhaul Alaska has been funded by a mix of grants, partner funding, and in-kind contributions. The Commission and the US Environmental Protection Agency have worked together to provide more than \$3 million over the pilot and buildout phases. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Transportation, and others have also contributed. During this time, Backhaul Alaska has developed reliable partnerships with private entities such as Alaska Air Cargo, Matson, and the Responsible Battery Coalition (whose membership includes Honda, Clarios, and O'Reilly Auto Parts) for in-kind contributions. This support offsets the cost to the public sector. In addition, the Solid Waste Alaska Taskforce is pursuing an Extended Producer Responsibility program for electronics in Alaska, which requires producers to pay for the end cost of their products. Backhaul Alaska is uniquely positioned to provide services as part of an EPR program; this revenue would also offset the public cost. As the existing grants reach their end, the Commission has identified funding for Backhaul Alaska through September 30, 2026.

We would be delighted to work with the State of Alaska to ensure continued funding for the Backhaul Alaska program. We propose this may be achieved by legislative appropriation to the Commission for this purpose. At the same time, we will continue to work with EPA and other federal agencies to secure additional federal funds.

Sincerely,

Julie Kitka, Federal Co-Chair

CC: Senate President Gary Stevens
House Speaker Bryce Edgemon
Solid Waste Alaska Task Force