

(<https://www.ktoo.org/>).

Juneau (<https://www.ktoo.org/category/news/alaska/juneau/>) | State Government (<https://www.ktoo.org/category/news/topics/government/state-government/>) | Transportation (<https://www.ktoo.org/category/news/topics/economy-2/transportation/>).

## Southeast ferry riders call proposed Cascade Point terminal a 'boondoggle' in public comments

February 4, 2026 by Alix Soliman, KTOO (<https://www.ktoo.org/author/alixsoliman/>)

Share: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [RSS](#) [LinkedIn](#) [StumbleUpon](#) [Reddit](#) [Tumblr](#) [Pinterest](#) [VK](#) [WhatsApp](#) [Telegram](#) [Messenger](#) [Signal](#) [SMS](#) [Print](#) [Copy Link](#) [Copy](#) [Paste](#) [Close](#)



An aerial view of Berners Bay, where the state is proposing to build the Cascade Point Ferry Terminal. (Photo by Alix Soliman/KTOO)

More than 90% of the [comments](https://media.ktoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Cascade_Point_Phase1_Public-Comments-Combined_.pdf) submitted to the state reject the Cascade Point ferry terminal proposed in Juneau. Many of the comments opposing the project suggest the purported benefits to ferry passengers are disingenuous, and the project looks instead like a fast-tracked subsidy for mining companies.

Dozens of commenters said that the public process to approve this project is lacking, with the comment period and a [highly criticized](https://alaskapublic.org/news/alaska-desk/2025-10-30/state-analysis-of-cascade-point-ferry-terminal-draws-fire-from-advisory-board-haines-mayor) economic analysis coming after the state already [signed a \\$28 million contract](https://www.ktoo.org/2025/07/31/state-signs-28-5m-contract-to-advance-new-ferry-terminal-over-objections-from-marine-highway-board/) for the first phase of construction, set to begin this summer.

The plan (<https://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/cascade-point-ferry-terminal/assets/CP%20Design%20Build%20RFP%20Part%20III%20-%20Scope%20of%20Work.pdf>) includes developing an access road from the end of Glacier Highway north to the site — roughly 30 miles north of the existing Auke Bay Ferry Terminal — and a staging area for future construction.

Leaders in Skagway (<https://khnswebsitemedia.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/04/162243/skagway-letter.pdf>) and Haines (<https://khns.org/state-analysis-of-cascade-point-ferry-terminal-draws-fire-from-advisory-board-haines-mayor/>) oppose the project. Members of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board have also questioned the motives behind it and said it doesn't fit into their long-range plan for the [Alaska Marine Highway System](https://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/operations/summary.shtml) (<https://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/operations/summary.shtml>).

## Public funds for private industry

The Juneau Assembly (<https://www.ktoo.org/2025/11/03/haines-and-skagway-both-oppose-cascade-point-ferry-terminal-juneau-hasnt-taken-a-stance/>) hasn't taken an official stance on the state's plan, but Assembly Member Maureen Hall wrote a comment objecting to it.

“I oppose the use of public funds to construct a remote State of Alaska ferry terminal when the facility's apparent primary purpose is to function as an ore dock for private industry,” Hall wrote. “This represents a blatant misuse of public resources and raises serious concerns about the appropriateness and legality of such expenditures.”

Of the more than 500 comments opposing the project, a majority said the project would mainly benefit mining companies with holdings nearby and Goldbelt Native Corporation, which owns the land where the terminal would be built. Thirty-three commenters called the project a “boondoggle” outright, including Juneau resident Bjorn Wolter.

“There is just no reason at all to build a new terminal,” Wolter wrote. “This project has all the potential to be another South Mitkof or Coffman Cove boondoggle.”

Those [ferry terminals](https://alaskapublic.org/news/2014-09-11/ferry-system-plans-for-new-route-in-southeast) (<https://alaskapublic.org/news/2014-09-11/ferry-system-plans-for-new-route-in-southeast>) on Mitkof Island and Prince of Wales Island cost millions of dollars. They were built far from the population centers they were meant to serve and close to logging sites 20 years ago. Two years after they were built, the Inter-Island Ferry Authority stopped running routes to them, and both have since sat unused.

The Cascade Point ferry terminal stands to benefit the [New Amalga gold mine](https://www.ktoo.org/2025/03/28/canadian-company-pushes-forward-with-plans-for-new-gold-mine-in-juneau/) (<https://www.ktoo.org/2025/03/28/canadian-company-pushes-forward-with-plans-for-new-gold-mine-in-juneau/>) proposed near the face of Herbert Glacier by Grande Portage Resources Ltd., a Canadian company. In [December](https://grandeportage.com/news/grande-portage-reports-advancements-of-transportation-infrastructure-at-the-new-amalga-gold-project/) (<https://grandeportage.com/news/grande-portage-reports-advancements-of-transportation-infrastructure-at-the-new-amalga-gold-project/>), Grande Portage announced that it is working with Goldbelt to design an ore barge dock alongside Cascade Point.

Ian Klassen, president and CEO of the company, was one of the 49 people who commented in favor of Cascade Point. He wrote that the plan will “create possibilities that currently do not exist north of Juneau for the reliable movement of cargo and commerce.”

Steve Ball, general manager of Coeur Alaska's Kensington Mine, located across Berners Bay from the proposed site, also wrote in favor.

“The twice-daily boat trips to the Kensington Mine would depart from the new Cascade Point Ferry Terminal, resulting in reduced risk for our workforce, contractors, and visitors by shortening the distance of the boat run and exposure to the Upper Lynn Canal,” Ball wrote.

Coeur Alaska contracts with Goldbelt to [transport miners \(https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/large-mines/kensington/pdf/othersupport/2022\\_April\\_Kensington\\_MTP.pdf\)](https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/large-mines/kensington/pdf/othersupport/2022_April_Kensington_MTP.pdf) to Kensington, mainly from Yankee Cove and from Echo Cove during inclement weather.

## Ferry users weigh-in

The state has been pushing for the new terminal for [several years \(https://www.ktoo.org/2023/03/10/state-agreement-with-goldbelt-inc-moves-cascade-point-terminal-project-forward/\)](https://www.ktoo.org/2023/03/10/state-agreement-with-goldbelt-inc-moves-cascade-point-terminal-project-forward/) and has said it would benefit travelers in Southeast by reducing operating costs and travel time between Juneau, Haines and Skagway.

But hundreds of commenters said building a second terminal in Juneau doesn't solve the [problems that the Alaska Marine Highway Service faces \(https://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/operations/summary.shtml\)](https://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/operations/summary.shtml), including an aging fleet, crew shortages, reduced sailings and a lack of funding to address those issues.

Robin Ross is treasurer for the Organized Village of Kake, the tribal government for the village, and secretary for the Kake City School District. She commented that the project fails to address ongoing transportation needs in Southeast. She said a ferry cancellation disrupted a mammogram van service that provides cancer screenings for women there, and while flights were arranged for some women, not all were able to travel.

“The unfortunate reality is that a recent breast cancer diagnosis in October may have been

detected sooner had the ferry service not been canceled in May,” Ross wrote. “The ferry service serves as a critical lifeline.”

DOT's FAQ page says, “terminal projects like Cascade Point are a critical step toward a stronger, more resilient system while new vessels are planned and funded through separate processes.”

But members of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board [told the Anchorage Daily News \(https://www.ktoo.org/2025/07/31/state-signs-28-5m-contract-to-advance-new-ferry-terminal-over-objections-from-marine-highway-board/\)](https://www.ktoo.org/2025/07/31/state-signs-28-5m-contract-to-advance-new-ferry-terminal-over-objections-from-marine-highway-board/) that the project has been foisted upon AMHS and will create operational challenges they have to deal with. Last year, Gov. Dunleavy [vetoed \(https://alaskapublic.org/news/politics/2025-12-10/state-senators-express-skepticism-about-proposed-juneau-ferry-terminal-backed-by-dunleavy\)](https://alaskapublic.org/news/politics/2025-12-10/state-senators-express-skepticism-about-proposed-juneau-ferry-terminal-backed-by-dunleavy) state legislators' plan to divert funding from Cascade Point.

Southeast residents said that while a ferry ride from Juneau to Haines might be shorter, the burden will be placed on drivers and walkers to get to and from the new terminal, which is much farther from the city center. The city bus system already does not extend to the Auke Bay ferry terminal — it's about a two-mile walk along the highway shoulder from the last stop.

Sean Powell, a current AMHS crew member, commented that commuting to Cascade Point would be much more difficult. “The increased distance, combined with weather conditions and other unforeseen disruptions, would add unnecessary challenges for crew members,” he wrote. “I believe funding would be better spent improving our existing infrastructure.”

Emily Mesch drives for rideshare services in Juneau during the summer and commented that it's already difficult to make money driving people to the Auke Bay ferry terminal since it's not centrally located. “I would never pick up a passenger there,” she wrote of the Cascade Point location, “unless the fares were about as high as a ferry ride, itself.”

According to the Alaska Department of Transportation, Goldbelt has committed to running a [shuttle service](https://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/cascade-point-ferry-terminal/faqs.shtml) (<https://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/cascade-point-ferry-terminal/faqs.shtml>) from Cascade Point to Auke Bay and the Mendenhall Valley, but hasn't set a ticket price yet.

DOT said that increasing snow plow service along Glacier Highway would cost about \$30,000 if ferries operate out of Cascade Point in the winter. But after back-to-back snowstorms slammed Juneau this winter, some commenters said they're not confident that plow service would be reliable.


"DOT and the city are both overwhelmed when we get snow, let alone the storms that have hit at the end of December and into January," wrote Morgan Ramseth. "Placing necessary services at the end of a poorly maintained road seems completely out of touch with reality."

Others said increasing traffic farther out the road would stretch the city's emergency services thin.

The comment period for the first phase of the project ended on Jan. 9. The Alaska House Transportation Committee will hold a [hearing](https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Meeting/Detail?Meeting=HTRA%202026-02-05%2013:30:00#tab2_4) ([https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Meeting/Detail?Meeting=HTRA%202026-02-05%2013:30:00#tab2\\_4](https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Meeting/Detail?Meeting=HTRA%202026-02-05%2013:30:00#tab2_4)), with the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board and DOT on Thursday, Feb. 5 at 1:30 p.m.

**Local, fact-based news is the foundation of our democracy.**

*The recent loss of federal funding puts KTOO's essential public service at risk.*

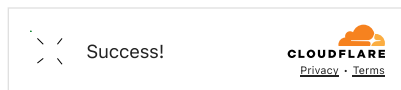
Your support is critical right now. 

**KTOO**

[\[https://www.ktoo.org/donate\]](https://www.ktoo.org/donate)

## Sign up for The Signal

Top Alaska stories delivered to your inbox every week



### KTOO Links

[About](http://www.ktoo.org/about/) (<http://www.ktoo.org/about/>).

[Contact Us](/contact/) (</contact/>).

[Where to Tune](/where-to-tune/) (</where-to-tune/>).

[Report Reception Problems](/where-to-tune/reception/) (</where-to-tune/reception/>).

[Community Calendar](/calendar/) (</calendar/>).

[KTOO Board of Directors](http://www.ktoo.org/board-of-directors/) (<http://www.ktoo.org/board-of-directors/>).

[Community Advisory Board](http://www.ktoo.org/community-advisory-board/) (<http://www.ktoo.org/community-advisory-board/>).