

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON HOUSE DISTRICT 2

SPONSOR STATEMENT House Joint Resolution 4

“Proposing amendments to the constitution of the State of Alaska creating a transportation infrastructure fund”

HJR 4 will put a constitutional amendment before voters to amend the Alaska constitution to reinstate a dedicated fund for Transportation Projects.

The crafters of the constitution allowed for 3 dedicated funds at the time of statehood. They realized that some funds would be needed no matter the economic or political climate. Transportation, one for land and one for sea, were two of the funds that predated the constitution. They lasted for several years until they were eliminated. HJR 4 will reinstate a transportation fund.

In FY10, 87% of our transportation budget came from the federal government. There have been several major deposits to the Federal Highway Fund to keep the expired federal transportation reauthorization program going. After 2 years we are still operating under the old reauthorization guidelines. All indicators show that the new reauthorization bill will be unfavorable for states with small populations due to an emphasis on mass transit and green transportation. It favors toll roads and bridges and other transportation that pays for itself or that can be supported with a public private partnership. Our own DC delegation have told the legislature that Alaska needs to rely less on the federal government and start shouldering some of the burden of improving our transportation infrastructure.

The roads, bridges, airports, ferries and transit systems that make up our state’s transportation system are essential to mobility, commerce and economic development. This system enhances economic competitiveness, increases safety and enhances quality of life. There is a growing imbalance between system use and capacity as well as the need for new infrastructure to access our valuable resources. To insure Alaska has the infrastructure necessary to develop our resources as well as providing a quality of life for our citizens we must commit to funding transportation. Having a dependable revenue stream from year to year will allow Alaska to tackle today’s congestion and maintenance projects as well as developing the needed access to resources and energy.

Version D has removed one of the revenue streams, airport leases and airspace leases, because federal grants requirements state that the revenue from those leases be used directly on the airports they were collected from.