

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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March 3, 2014

Honorable Dennis Egan
Chair Senate Transportation
Alaska Senate
State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau AK 99801

Honorable Peggy Wilson
Chair House Transportation
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau AK 99801

RE: Joint Senate and House Transportation Meeting with Juneau Access

Dear Senator Egan and Representative Wilson:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this letter of support for Juneau Access to the Joint Senate and House Transportation Committee.

My comments about Juneau Access are offered largely in the context of budgets.

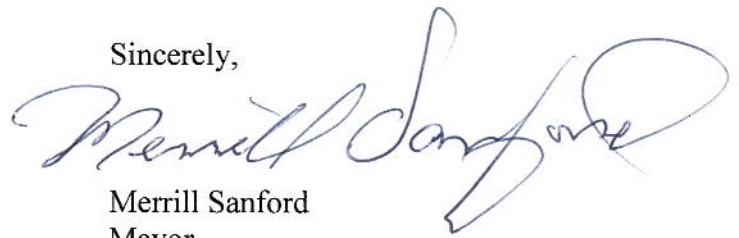
For some twenty years – as Chief of the Fire Department, a member of the CBJ Assembly and now as Mayor of Juneau, I have worked with budgets. It is always a struggle to find a balance between what we need and what we can afford and to consider both the capital cost of constructing vital infrastructure as well as ongoing operational costs. As the Transportation Committee considers Juneau Access, I trust that future sustainability of services will be seriously evaluated.

The official position of the City and Borough of Juneau is firmly in support of Juneau Access. Juneau also understands the critical importance of the Alaska Marine Highway System to all of Southeast Alaska. I firmly believe that the future of ferry service in Southeast depends on a system that is fiscally sustainable in light of declining state revenues but that still meets the basic needs of the traveling public and Alaska's roadless communities. History has proven that the cost of maintaining roads in Alaska is substantially less than operating and maintaining ferries. When Juneau Access is complete, two expensive mainliners will no longer be required for the northern Lynn Canal route, and ferry service to other Southeast communities will be more secure and even improved. In my mind, better ferry service for other Southeast communities with lower operating costs for the Marine Highway is one of the most important benefits of Juneau Access.

Equally important, again in light of state budgets, are the opportunities for expanded economic activity provided by this road. The benefits are not limited to northern Southeast. Construction of the road will employ hundreds of Alaskans from around the state. Once built, the road will support increased commerce from tourism and fisheries to numerous small businesses. This economic activity is vitally important to our region.

Juneau Access will serve to improve and secure transportation throughout the region and give us the boost needed to stabilize and grow our Southeast economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Merrill Sanford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Merrill Sanford
Mayor

cc: Representative Cathy Munoz
Representative Sam Kito III
Kevin Jardell