



**ALASKA FEDERATION
OF NATIVES**

December 27, 2011

The Honorable Peggy Wilson, Chair
Alaska State House Committee on Transportation
Alaska State Legislature
State Capital Building, Room 406
Juneau, Alaska 99811
Email: Representative Peggy Wilson

Dear Chair Wilson:

As you know, one of the key factors impacting the economy of the State of Alaska is affordable means of transportation of goods and services to communities in Alaska and in particular, communities located in rural and remote parts of the state. The delegates of the 2011 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) are acutely aware of this fact and unanimously passed the attached resolution:

AFN Convention Resolution 11-46: Supporting a Creation of a State Funded Transportation Program.

Last fall, just before the freeze up, the Iliamna Bridge was damaged and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Commissioner, Honorable Marc Luiken, made efforts of repairing the bridge as soon as he became aware of its damage. The Iliamna Bridge was damaged without warning, as is often the case with winter conditions, such as water freezing, began to set in throughout that part of the State of Alaska. What happened with the Iliamna Bridge is an excellent example and illustration as to why the Alaska Legislature should pass the bills introduced in 2011, related to infrastructure: HB30, An Act Relating to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund and HB31, An Act Making a Special Appropriation to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund in the Sum of \$1 billion. The intent, we believe, of these bills is to create transportation infrastructure that would be in place to address Iliamna Bridge type of situations that may arise without warning.

Another example demonstrating the acute need for affordable means of transportation is the major storm experienced by the communities in Western Alaska. President Obama issued a federal disaster declaration for damages from the September 2011 storm along the Western Alaska Coast on December 22, 2011 and it follows an earlier state declaration for damages by the Honorable Sean Parnell for the same area. Alaska's Congressional Delegation wrote a letter to President Obama on December 8, 2011 asking that federal attention be given the region "from Hooper Bay to the North Slope" that was hit by "a winter storm of a magnitude not seen in decades."

The storm demonstrated that the State of Alaska should consider the development of maritime transportation Infrastructure to all of Alaska; and in particular, as it impacts rural Alaska.

The State of Alaska's transportation infrastructure is aging and at the rate that it is aging, we are concerned that it may age faster than repairs can be made at present funding levels. Alaska is

experiencing some declining road conditions where pot holes and ruts may not be repaired timely, and dust has become a health and safety hazard; particularly, in rural Alaska.

I am excerpting some portions of the attached resolution that I believe speak for themselves without any additional explanation:

- Federal funds are the primary source for construction and repair of Alaska's Highway Transportation infrastructure
- The Highway Trust Fund reauthorization legislation has expired with continuing resolutions extending it until new legislation can be passed
- Alaska is one of only two states that does not have a state funded capital transportation program; and,
- The Federal Highway program funds are not sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of Alaska's citizens; With the projected funds received the State LRTP priority will focus on the National Highway System, the Alaska Highway Systems and local roads and ports and harbors; and,
- This priority will put a disadvantage on rural Alaska, which has many unmet needs in the form of transportation infrastructure; and
- Using state funds will result in less expensive projects being constructed more quickly; and,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc, to urge you to consider and enact HB30, An Act Relating to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund and HB31, An Act Making a Special Appropriation to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund in the Sum of \$1 billion to create a state funded transportation program resulting in a long-term sustainable State Funded Transportation Program to address the Alaska Highway System and local roads unmet needs.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions regarding this letter, please call me at AFN at 907-274-3611.

Sincerely,



Nelson N. Angapak, Sr.
Senior Vice President

Attachment: AFN Convention Resolution 11-46

CC: The Honorable Reggie Joule, Co-chair, Bush Caucus, State House
The Honorable Albert Kookesh, Co-chair, Bush Caucus, State Senate
The Honorable Lyman Hoffman
The Honorable Bryce Edgmon
The Honorable Sean Parnell
The Honorable Marc Luiken



ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES, INC

2011 ANNUAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION 11-46

TITLE: SUPPORTING A CREATION OF A STATE FUNDED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

WHEREAS: The State of Alaska's Legislature has introduced HB30, An Act Relating to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund and HB31, An Act Making a Special Appropriation to the Transportation Infrastructure Fund in the Sum of \$1 billion; and,

WHEREAS: Federal funds are the primary source for construction and repair of Alaska's Highway Transportation infrastructure; and,

WHEREAS: The Highway Trust Fund reauthorization legislation has expired with continuing resolutions extending it until new legislation can be passed; and,

WHEREAS: Alaska is one of only two states that does not have a state funded capital transportation program; and,

WHEREAS: The purchasing power of federal funds has declined due to inflation and ever increasing federal requirements and the high cost of construction; and,

WHEREAS: The State of Alaska's transportation infrastructure is aging faster than repairs can be made at present funding levels; Alaska is experiencing declining road conditions such as increased congestion, pot holes and ruts are not being repaired, and dust has become a health and safety hazard; and,

WHEREAS: Climate change in Alaska is resulting in damage to roads due to permafrost thawing and increased flooding; and,

WHEREAS: Poor road conditions and increased congestion lead to higher accident rates and create health problems with dust; and,

WHEREAS: The Federal Highway program funds are not sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of Alaska's citizens; With the projected funds received the State LRTP priority will focus on the National Highway System, the Alaska Highway Systems and local roads and ports and harbors; and,

WHEREAS: This priority will put a disadvantage on rural Alaska, which has many unmet needs in the form of transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS: Using state funds will result in less expensive projects being constructed more quickly; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Delegates to the 2011 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc, that AFN urges the State of Alaska to dedicate \$1 billion to create a state funded transportation program that results in a long-term sustainable State Funded Transportation Program to address the Alaska Highway System and local roads unmet needs.

SUBMITTED BY: KAWERAK, INC.

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

CONVENTION ACTION: PASSED

