

From: [Merry Ellefson / Wayne Carnes](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#); [Sen. Dennis Egan](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Rep. Sam Kito](#); [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Can we at least see your AK Marine Highway long-term transportation plan?
Date: Monday, March 30, 2015 9:37:27 AM

Legislators,
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Last night I returned to Juneau with 40 youth and a few chaperones on the state ferry Aurora. We participated, along with 330 others, in the Buckwheat ski race just over the border in the Yukon, an event which joins youth and adults from Haines, Skagway and Whitehorse for friendly competition.

As a coach for 15 years (High School running, skiing, nordic skiing and Team Alaska Snowshoe), a lot of my year is spent on ferries with young people. Ferry travel is essential for our competition, and, in my opinion, the more important components of building a healthy Alaska- getting to know other communities, team building, and connection to other youth across the state; in this unique Alaskan way, the ferries serve thousands of teens year-round and ultimately end in teens selecting to attend UAS, or move to Anchorage, or work in Skagway with summer tourism. In fact, we will be taking 50 Juneau athletes for our annual team retreat in the Yukon in August. I hope.

I am shocked and angry about the plan to devastate the ferry service with such extreme cuts so soon. As you know!, these impact the services to many small communities, our tourism industry, and the other benefits which connect Alaska and keep our citizens safe. Your long term plan around these Marine Highway cuts is crucial, and I do understand that the lack of vision for the last 20 years as led us to our current state of drastic reductions.

I question the vision of cutting the service during the summer!, when the ferries are utilized to share our state with visitors and often run full. Further, the cuts are discriminatory and impact day to day services of those who do not live on the road system. And I respectfully request some reason as to why considering the road north from Juneau remains a viable option. The reason for the road is the heavy traffic? and the ferry service is shut down? Again, please, explain.

I urge the legislature to proceed with a more gradual and planned approach for reducing the AMHS budget and finding efficiencies to reduce the impact on our local and state economy.

And finally, implement an income tax. It's the fairest way to continue to invigorate the economy and our citizens.

Sincerely,

Merry Ellefson

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